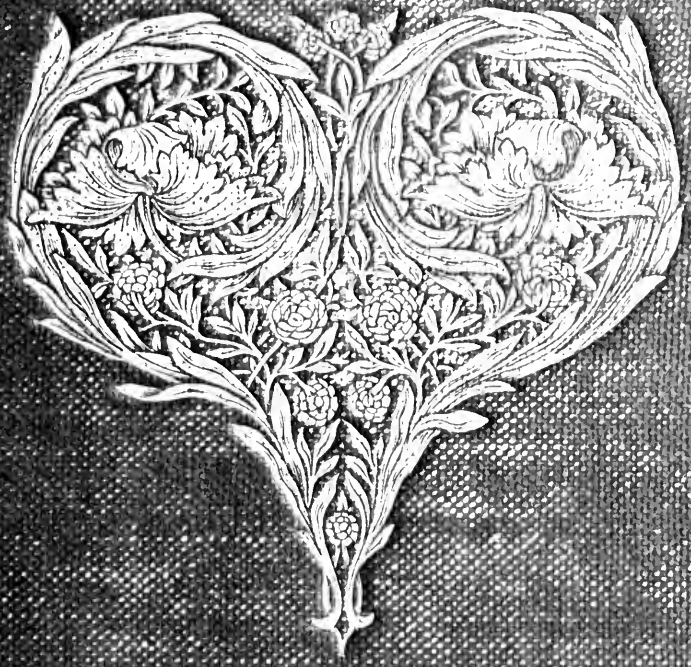
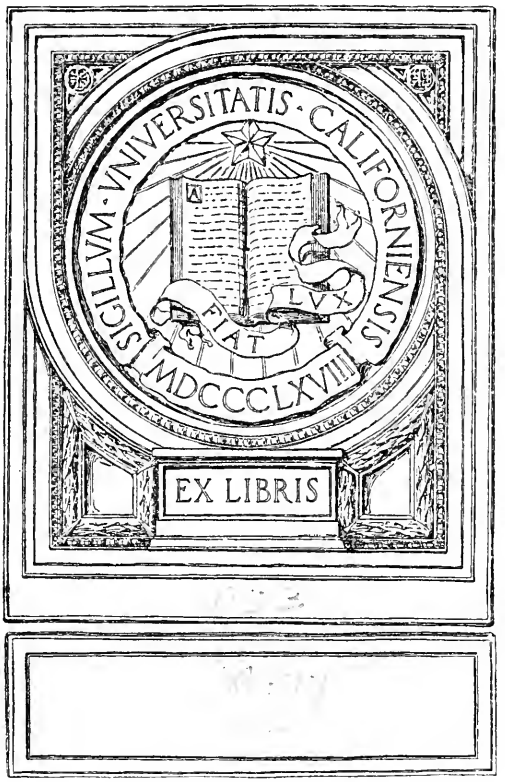
WILLIAM MORRIS

POET: CRAFTSMAN: SOCIAL REFORMER

A STUDY IN PERSONALITY

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WILLIAM MORRIS
Circa 1893

WILLIAM MORRIS

A STUDY IN PERSONALITY

BY ARTHUR COMPTON-RICKETT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY

MCMXIII

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH

To
My Friend
Isabel Jones

271007

INTRODUCTION

By R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

OUT of the number of the greyhounds comes the destruction of the hare, a proverb says, and it may well be that in a multitude of memoirs, all recollection of a man is lost.

The object of the present work is to endeavour above all things to reconstruct the man just as he spoke and worked.

To do this all his friends still living, simple and learned, have been approached. Into which category I fall I am sure I do not know, though I know well enough I am not learned at all.

Most of the striking descriptions of celebrated men that have come down to us have come from those who could put in no claim to being learned. Few such, in my estimation, are better than the pages in which Bernal Diaz del Castillo describes Cortés, painting him so that

we could know him, if by chance, standing at an angle of the Plaza in the town of Medellin, he passed across the square. The man is not so much depicted as preserved, as it were by an embalmer. If his coffin were to be opened and his body found intact, all readers of the *Conquest of New Spain* would cry at once, "Cortés!" The writer did not labour his description, but just set down all that had struck him in his hero, physically in the first place; for after all the mind must have a body in which to live, and show its qualities.

It all looks easy, as easy as when with red and white and blue and black—I think that was his palette with slight variety—Velasquez set down Philip for all time, so easily, that one feels that the King's hand was light upon the long branched bridle with which he rides.

Quel facile . . . !

Well, well——

Morris was of the middle height and very strongly built, not the least athletic looking; but still a stout carle for the nones.

His face was ruddy, and his hair inclined to red and grew in waves like water just before it

breaks over a fall. His beard was of the same colour as his hair. His eyes were blue and fiery. His teeth small and irregular, but white except upon the side on which he held his pipe, where they were stained with brown. When he walked he swayed a little, not like a sailor sways, but as a man who lives a sedentary life, toddles a little in his gait. His ears were small, his nose high and well made, his hands and feet small for a man of his considerable bulk.

His speech and his address were fitting to the man; bold, bluff and hearty. "None of your damned poets about me!" he might have said—perhaps he did; I almost fancy that he did.

He was quick-tempered and irritable, swift to anger and swift to reconciliation, and I should think never bore malice in his life.

When he talked he seldom looked long at you, and his hands were always twisting, as if they wished to be at work. Argument he brooked but hardly, and was apt to break out into a loud tone, which in him somehow or another was just what you expected, and personally, always reminded me of Njal or Berewulf.

With a broad-edged battle-axe in his hand, standing up in a Viking galley, he would have looked just in his place, or with a narwhal's tusk hollowed into a cup he would have been equally at home carousing with the sea rovers, when the fight was done.

However, when he spoke in public, his relatively weak voice and halting speech astonished one, and you felt, perhaps, his place would have been, then as now, beside the harpers in the hall.

When others spoke or lectured, he drew intricate patterns on a sheet of paper. I often wish I had preserved a few of those loose sheets of notes ; but then he looked built to defy all time ; even if it had come into my head.

His speech was not convincing, but most enthusiastic in its quality. You felt when hearing it : this man is right, although you half suspected he was wrong. That kind of speech befits the kind of man that Morris was, for those who speak in order to convince, most commonly speak to advance a cause, and not unusually their own.

Morris most certainly wanted nothing from

mankind. His was the nature that has all to give—his art, his genius, ideas, and himself; to hear him was to feel all this—and more. On listening to him it seemed he should have been an orator and yet he was not; but he was better than an orator, for you felt he was a man.

I think he had no humour, for he loved fun, broad, mediæval fun and jokes.

Now fun and humour cannot exist together in one man, any more than profit goes with honour in one bag.

Quibbles on words he loved, and *Huckleberry Finn* seemed to him exquisite fooling; but keen French wit, or the subtle humour of the Italian mind, would have appeared to him either not funny in the least, or not perceivable.

Criticism did not, I fancy, bother him greatly, and for it he used to substitute that hearty hatred of forms of art that did not interest him, an attitude which minds, strongly creative in themselves, are prone to fall into. "The hot and greasy daubs of Sir Joshua Reynolds," was said by him to me. Perhaps he may have said it first to someone else; but he delivered it with so much unction, that if he was not

saying it for the first time in all his life, his credit is the more, for certainly the fury of his phrase left little to desire.

Poets there have been who, when one has read their works, all that we have to do with them is done; but to read Morris and never to have known the man is to lose half of him. Something there was so simple and direct, so faith-inspiring and whole-souled about him, that all his verse and all his many-sided life seem to me incomplete unless one knew him and had felt his charm.

For me, he was no mystic, but a sort of symbolist set in a mediæval frame, and it appeared to me that all his love of the old times of which he wrote was chiefly of the setting; of tapestries well wrought; of needlework, rich colours of stained glass falling upon old monuments, and of fine work not scamped. I cannot find a trace of mediævalism in the inside of his work, although perhaps there are influences here and there of the time when Thor swung his hammer, and in the Orkneys people passed their heads through the round hole hewn in the stone of Woden.

Quietly enough he sleeps in the churchyard in Gloucestershire, beside the straggling elm hedge where I saw him laid to rest.

The seasons come and go; in spring the elms are dressed in that light Lincoln green he loved; in summer nightingales sing above his head; in autumn all is turned to gold; and in the winter nights the owls hoot, answering one another from the tall trees to the church tower.

He fought his fight and now is resting, and when the time comes it will not matter much to him, I take it, if he awakens to the sound of the last Trump, or a shrill blast on Odin's horn.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

PREFACE

SINCE William Morris died in 1896, there have been many studies of his life and work, from the authoritative and scholarly biography by Professor Mackail, to the finely-written appraisement of Mr. John Drinkwater, himself a poet of note. But perhaps there is still an opening for a volume that shall deal more particularly with the personal equation of Morris.

Few men of our time had so vivid and challenging a personality. He was a gifted poet, a distinguished proseman, a superb craftsman and a vigorous social force. Yet first and foremost he was a great personality. For this reason, while attention has been given to a critical consideration of the purely literary aspects of Morris's work, the present book is primarily a study in personality and temperament. The writer has sought to present the amazingly various activities of Morris through his personality, rather than to view them as

something apart from the man. For though these activities were legion, the impelling spirit and controlling method were always the same.

In order to present a clear and vital picture of the man, the writer has sought the firsthand impressions of as many, as possible, of Morris's intimates and acquaintances, for whereas X may see certain traits clearly, Z will see other points more vividly. A great man, like a great mountain, must be viewed from diverse sides in order that his characteristics may be properly rated.

To say that Morris's circle of acquaintances was wide, his ring of intimate friends constricted, is only to reiterate what is equally true of many another public man. But in Morris's case the implication carries with it more significance. For all his outward geniality he was a man of considerable reserve ; and while some of his qualities are obvious enough to any passing acquaintance, the real heart of the man was revealed only to one or two intimates. Thus his simplicity and hearty directness of manner proved an unconscious snare to the hasty observer. When a mountain has its head in the clouds it is easy to mistake its proportions : you must see it under many and various conditions, to adjudge its size. How far the

present writer has succeeded in drawing a live and recognizable figure of Morris must be left for others to determine. If he has failed, the fault lies entirely at his doors and not at those of the many friends who have so generously placed much entirely fresh *personalia* at his disposal.

For most of the personal matter the writer is indebted to Morris's friends and acquaintances, and he acknowledges gratefully his varying obligations to Morris's sister Mrs. Gilmore, to Mr. Belfort Bax, Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Dr. Stopford Brooke, Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Bt., the Rt. Hon. John Burns, M.P., Mr. Walter Crane, Mr. Jack Edwards of Liverpool, Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Sir William Blake Richmond, K.C.B., Mr. W. M. Rossetti, Mr. Tochatti, Mr. Thackeray Turner, Mr. Emery Walker, and Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, also to a few who prefer to be nameless. Especially is he grateful to Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt for placing at his disposal the interesting reminiscence of Morris's last visit, and to Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham for his unfailing kindness and courtesy on all matters connected with the work. When the book was in proof, Mr. Cunninghame Graham kindly read through the opening chapters, and at the suggestion of the

writer generously consented to contribute a pen sketch by way of introduction, giving his own impression of Morris's personality and appearance.

Finally, for helpful information on certain points, he wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of Mr. Warwick Draper (the present tenant of Kelmscott House), Mr. Buxton Forman, Miss Elizabeth Lee, Mr. H. C. Marillier (of Morris & Co.), and Mr. Robert Ross, while he has been fortunate in having throughout, the sympathetic interest and stimulating co-operation of his publisher, Mr. Herbert Jenkins.

It is hoped that the comparative chronological table at the end of the work will prove useful in indicating the general social history of the period during which Morris lived, as well as serving as a reference to the biographical facts of his life.

ARTHUR COMPTON-RICKETT.

24 DRYBURGH ROAD, PUTNEY, S.W.

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WILLIAM MORRIS, *circa* 1893 . . . *Frontispiece*

MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS, FROM A PAINTING BY D. G. ROSSETTI . . . . . *To face page* 158

Permission to make certain quotations from Prof. Mackail's *Life of William Morris* has been kindly accorded by Messrs. Longmans & Co.; from his published writings by the Trustees and Executors of Morris, to whom also I am indebted for allowing me to publish certain letters to Sir Philip Burne-Jones and Mr. Tochatti; from *Theodore Watts-Dunton* by James Douglas to Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton and Mr. James Douglas; from the *Ipané* by R. B. Cunninghame Graham to Mr. Fisher Unwin, the Editor of the *Saturday Review* and Mr. Cunninghame Graham; from *John Ruskin* by J. A. Hobson to Messrs. James Nisbet & Co.; and from reviews and notices in the *Athenæum* by T. Watts-Dunton to the Editor of the *Athenæum* and Mr. Watts-Dunton.

PART I

THE MANNER OF MAN

WILLIAM MORRIS

I

"CAPTAIN OF THE SEA SWALLOW"

"Before man made us citizens,
Great Nature made us men."
J. R. Lowell.

SWINGING along the roadway comes a burly, broad-backed man of medium height, clad in a comfortable suit of navy blue, with his plentiful hair, grey-flecked and obtrusive, under a soft wide-brimmed hat. The whole build of the man radiates restless activity, from the aggressive vitality of his head of hair and the wrinkled exuberance of the flannel collar to the emphatic tap of the big walking-stick.

The face is strong and weather-beaten; and over his sturdy shoulders is slung a dun-coloured canvas bag, wherein reposes a miscellany of treasures, not the least valuable being

a wealth of stray pipes for any friend at some out-of-the-way meeting who might need one. The voice that greets you is pleasant and musical in tone, the manner hearty and direct. An honest Autolycus—if such a possibility does not strain the imagination unduly—with all that genial vagabond's love of the open air and vigorous, primal life; his indifference to appearance and regard for unconventional ways. Such is the rough general impression of William Morris in the later years of his life. Regarded at closer quarters, the physical characteristics of the man made a more definite and detailed impression. The most striking features were the brow and nose. The brow was splendid, and set in a framework of magnificent wavy hair. Often the hair would stand away from his head, falling into large rhythmic curves, and surmounting it like an aureole. The eyes were rather small and not specially notable; but the nose was finely moulded, Greek in shape; while the mouth, beautiful in his youth, was somewhat spoilt later by tricks of twisting and biting. Chin and jaw were not remarkable; the lower part of the face suggesting the artist rather than the man of affairs.

The body, sturdily fashioned, was set upon unusually short legs. The arms, contrary to

expectation, were thin and lacking in muscular development; the hands small but thick, the hands of a craftsman rather than an artist.

When chatting with him indoors you noticed his favourite gestures—the peculiar twitch to his beard, the restless hands, the shifting position.

If you chanced to touch on some topic in which Morris was not interested, or did not care to discuss, some point in philosophy, perhaps, he would shrug his body in a curious way, scratch himself vehemently, or go up to a door and rub his back against it as a sheep might, as if trying to get rid of the question.

Having filled his black wooden pipe with his usual mixture of "Latakia," he would allow it to go out time after time, and required a perfect storehouse of matches. Occasionally he would refresh himself with a pinch of snuff, but rarely did you see him with a cigar.

Talk to him on social matters, mark the flame of anger flashing into his grey eyes; listen to the muttered objurgations, to the sudden tempestuous outburst, to the equally sudden subsidence of the storm; note the shrewd sense of some casual remark, the blunt outspokenness, and you would certainly find it hard to realise that here was the wistful dreamer of *The Earthly Paradise*, the Utopian

visionary of *News from Nowhere*. But let some problem of decorative art spring up, or, better still, show Morris some rare mediæval manuscript, and then—what a change!—the rapt enthusiasm, the utter self-absorption in the artistic beauty of the treasure; the fine, fastidious appraisement of its excellences. Now, indeed, it was equally hard to believe that Morris had ever given straight, vigorous talks at street corners.

The arresting magnetism of the man lay in the piquant juxtaposition of two widely divergent personalities. On the one side he was an artist throughout, with the artist's tastes, his eclecticism, his whole-hearted devotion to the spirit of beauty; a dreamer of dreams; one who lived in a world of his own fashioning. On the other side, he was a bluff, direct, downright man interested in concrete realities; a man of shrewd common sense and practical sagacity. The dreamer imagined *The Earthly Paradise;* the practical man devised for it a ground plan. The dreamer passed through the drab wilderness of Victorian London, and with his gift of beauty warmed its bleakness into radiance. The practical man, seeing that the gift of beauty was a good thing, turned it into a limited company.

There is the well-known legend that a man stopped him one day in the street with : " Beg pardon, sir, were you ever captain of the *Sea Swallow ?* " The enquirer condensed, unwittingly, into this suggestive query the whole problem of Morris's personality.

For the *Sea Swallow* was a venturesome craft that none would confuse with a routine ocean liner, something other than the average seaworthy boat ; one that might boast acquaintance with the waters of Romance, navigable only by the magic compass of fantasy.

A pleasant name—the *Sea Swallow ;* one that suits the dreamer. But he was no mere passenger on the craft, he was *Captain, Master, Controller.* An incorrigible dreamer if you like, but master of his dreams ; not drifting hither and thither on the tide of his emotions, but navigating his imagination with a port in view. No visionary this ; no mild-eyed Alcott, enveloped in an atmosphere of vague idealism, but a sane, level-headed man, if ever there was one !

He is not the only Victorian man of letters whom the casual passer-by might have mistaken for a sea captain. There was the look of the sea captain also about Dickens and, to a lesser extent, about Robert Browning ; Dickens had made a jauntier sea captain, with his love

of bright colours; and Browning, with his dapper ways, a sprucer one. This chance resemblance may serve to connect three men in many respects widely divergent in disposition and the bent of their genius. It symbolises, agreeably, a common psychological characteristic. All these men were both dreamers and men of action; artists and men of the world. It needed all Dickens' simple homeliness and vivid sense of actuality to curb and restrain the fantastic extravagance of his dream self. As it is, his riotous imagination often broke bounds; and from one point of view *The Christmas Carol* is as Utopian a romance as *The Dream of John Ball.*

Tennyson once jokingly warned Browning, *à propos* of his liking for social functions, that he would die in a white tie. No one would have accused Morris of this. Moreover, Browning's southern tastes, his intellectual subtleties, found no counterpart in Morris. Yet in the elemental vigour and passion of the man, the fine audacity, the hearty love of the Earth, the contempt for the trifler and mere dilettante, the two men had no little in common.

Had it been possible to put Morris, Dickens, and Browning on the Underground Railway, and afterwards to have compared their impres-

sions, interesting variation of comment would have resulted. Dickens could have told us of the crowd of passengers and differentiated each one with his wonderful eye for external peculiarities. Browning would have found some psychological drama to his hand ; and Morris, after declaiming on the hideousness of it all, would have seemed the most keenly alive to the minutest points of railway organisation, which always interested him.

Veins of likeness and unlikeness to one another, cross and recross with startling vividness the personalities of these three great Victorians. In unlikeness assuredly, for each was a man of highly distinctive and assertive individuality ; but in likeness also, for each was a blend of contradictory selves, each enjoyed taking the middle-class Englishman by the scruff of his neck and shaking him with the best will in the world. Belonging to the middle class themselves, they knew all the family peculiarities, and the fact that none of them ever freed himself entirely of the conventions of his class, merely serves as another bond in common.

Morris was a shrewd observer in his own special way, though he gave the opposite impression to the casual onlooker. He never seemed to be on the watch, yet little escaped

him. Without any apparent effort of observation, he would come into a room and take in all the people there, their appearance and characteristics, with swift insight and acumen. There was no better companion on a railway journey, for he would give a running commentary on all the passing scenes, the architecture of the towns and villages, the history and charm of some old house or ruin, the character of the country, the hills and valleys, the crops and verdure, and the possibilities of the soil.

His mind was of the observant rather than the reflective order. In his rare moments of passivity, he enjoyed looking at beautiful things. In his far more frequent dynamic moods, he enjoyed making them.

Yet the grey eyes of Morris looked strangely unseeing at times ; often and often, while you were speaking to him, he would plunge into a train of thought, and late in life he developed a habit of talking to himself whenever he was alone.

Sleeping next door to a friend on one occasion, he kept up a continual booming as if arguing some point earnestly with a disputant. On the friend enquiring what was the matter, Morris replied, " Oh, it's all right, I'm only talking to myself about the weather." On

another occasion he was muttering so loudly to himself in the dining-room, that the maid who was laying the dinner asked if he wanted anything. Morris made no reply. He was far too engrossed in his outspoken thoughts. Moreover, he had the dreamer's love of old customs, and with the same friend never failed for many years to see the New Year in, though there was a faintly apologetic atmosphere about him when he did so. "After all, one day in the year is much the same as another," he would say. But he did not forgo the practice despite that. Not that the love of old customs appealed merely to his artistic side. He had a boyish relish for festivals of all kinds, and delighted in bright genial company.

He enjoyed certain games, but excelled in none. Backgammon he played constantly with his wife, and was as constantly beaten. He was an indifferent hand at whist, and a bad chess player. Perhaps it was as an angler that he is most noteworthy, and even there his patience was more remarkable than his prowess. Strong and vigorous in frame, and loving the open air as he did, there was a physical awkwardness about him that precluded athletic skill. He was a good walker none the less, and a vigorous man with the oar.

It was curious, however, to note how in the midst of some youthful prank or ebullition of high spirits, a dreamy look would come into the face, a look George Frederick Watts used to describe as his "mystery" look, when he would slip quietly away. He had gone to write some verses that had insistently appealed to his imagination. He wrote swiftly and easily, and the poem being done, or the momentary inspiration having declined, he returned to his friends and resumed his frolics as if nothing had happened.

The dreamer side of Morris was no spiritual watertight compartment, which he shut off and on at will; it invaded his active life. He became a public man because his dream life grew to be at last an intolerable responsibility to bear single-handed. He was a rich man, in spite of himself, because his dreams became the fashion, not because he was a shrewd bargainer. Without knowing the two men one would have said, from superficial observation, that Morris was a far better man of business than Rossetti. The reverse was the case. Rossetti had an unquestionable instinct for business; Morris was like a brilliant child. It was the easiest thing in the world to get the better of him, for if he wanted a thing, he

showed it at once in his boy-like, impetuous eagerness.

All this was due, not to any want of shrewdness, or failure to grasp business details; but to his disinterestedness and indifference to material success. With regard to the affairs of his friends, he was a shrewd man; as regards his own, like a light-hearted child.

When, in the course of his business, he was obliged to pursue defaulters into the County Court, he would assure them apologetically that it was all "part of the game." Commercial dealings he looked on as "more or less a game of diddling" in which sometimes one, sometimes the other got the better.

He was a man of the world in the sense that he lived in the world and took a part, a strenuous one, in practical affairs; but he lived in the world only because he hated it and wanted to make it more like the world of his dreams. He was a man of the world, just because he was a dreamer. His dreams were so gracious, so sweetening, that he could not bear to feel they were not realities. At first he was content to enjoy them—alone; feeling that the artist had no business to turn his hand to reforming. He was concerned with his Art, and Art was an exacting Mistress that brooked no rival. Then

his dreams broke bounds and invaded his active life; for he belonged to no moonlight order of dreamers. The world for him was not as it was to Hawthorne, a tangled scene of ghostly hopes, fears, and loves, seen through a delicate veil of fantasy. Morris was of the sunlight: his dreams were warm with the sun, and his fancies full-blooded and vital.

Vital! yes, from his earliest years the man was overflowing with vitality. True he was not addicted to the usual sports of boyhood, yet this did not imply, as in the case of S. T. Coleridge, an indolence of body, but because his exuberant imagination desired modes of energy that appealed to him more than ordinary boyish games. Anything in the nature of an adventure stirred him. As soon as he could walk he fancied himself as a knight errant, and the sight of a pony suggested possibilities of dragon-hunting in his toy suit of armour. He was suckled on Romance, and knew his Scott and Marryat almost before he could lisp their names. Most significant of all were the restless hands that sought constant employment and found temporary scope in continuous netting; and the lively fancy, that soon made for him a reputation as a story-teller, which after all indicates another kind of netting.

At school he was a human catapult, and if anyone interfered with the catapult, so much the worse for him. When he entered college, his tutor seemed to realise the irruption of an unpleasantly vital youth. From an academic standpoint Morris was a veritable Orson, and not even the friends whom he speedily made regarded him as an intellectual acquisition to his college, yet so he was. They soon realised that his explosive boisterousness concealed a rare knowledge of Art and Letters. Naturally here, as elsewhere, his tastes were emphatic and assertive; but, marked and definite as were his idiosyncrasies, his dogmatism was of the genial and attractive order.

Tennyson once spoke appreciatively of the "big still books" of the eighteenth-century novelists. The quality of "stillness" never appealed to Morris. We can more easily imagine him joining in the mediæval search for the secret of perpetual motion.

Life to him was a land of fortified citadels, each challenging the combatant. The first of the many citadels he took by storm was the citadel of Poetry.

His friends were delighted and surprised. They had not regarded him in the light of a poet. "He's a big poet," exclaimed the

enthusiastic Burne-Jones, after reading *The Willow and the Red Cliff*. It was the first piece of verse he had written. His biographer, Mr. Mackail, tells us there had been no novitiate, and not a trace of influence. Morris's characteristic answer was, "If that is poetry, it's very easy to write"; and he thought so little of it that he destroyed it soon after.

From one conquest he went on to another, that of Prose; and there are not a few critics—Andrew Lang for example—who looked upon his early prose romances as his finest and best. Certainly they have a remarkable freshness and beauty.

Experiments in literature were pleasingly varied by plans for founding a monastery, and boyish larks in the May-Day celebrations. When all these outlets for his exuberant vitality proved insufficient, he turned to single-stick, and soon gained a reputation for his furious attack.

"Topsy came tumbling into the room!" wrote a college friend.

That is Morris all over. Other men simply "came into a room," or "took up" subjects: Morris "tumbled" into rooms; and "hurled himself" into projects. If he read aloud, he punched his own head in the exuberance of his emotions. If he made a friend, he canonised

him straight away. Should he take unfurnished rooms, he must needs construct all the furniture. If he wanted a home he was obliged to design it in every particular. When he painted, he lived on a ladder ; when he dyed, he saw life through a blue mist ; when he wrote a Scandinavian epic, he had to wander over Iceland and shake the very soul out of the heroic mythology of the North. An interest in printing did not connote for him what it would for most men of active employment—a few literary works on the subject. It meant not only an exhaustive study of the use of different types but a thorough investigation into the process of paper-making. As if his multifold activities were not sufficient, he would rove restlessly about the room with that slow, undulating movement so characteristic of him. He talked with his whole body. One doubts if he would have been satisfied even with the mythical labour of Hercules. Later on, he realised that if he touched social reform it would involve an unusually vigorous projection of his personality into the vortex of modern life, and so it did ! He was in furious earnest about everything he undertook. With Morris it was a case of the Kingdom of Art suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm.

A physiological illustration of his vitality could be seen in the fine strong, tangled mane of hair. "Take hold of it," he would say to a little friend.[1] He would then lift him right off the ground, with no apparent inconvenience. Later in life the hair lost this amazing vitality and uprightness, and during the last few months, hung about his head, lustreless and drooping.

His life at Oxford mirrored in little what his entire life was to be, a series of splendid enthusiasms: Chaucer, Tennyson's *Maud*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the personality of Rossetti, Pre-Raphaelitism, Amiens Cathedral, Browning's *Men and Women*, Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, clay-modelling, wood-carving. Such a list, by no means exhaustive, typifies significantly the bonds of interest that were to grip him through Life.

The world for him was a brilliant diorama; and the succession of stories and pictures held and enchanted him. He was young, and he was healthy; he was rich in material things, and he had taste, intelligence, imagination. The world is a pleasant place in such circumstances; and life seems full of gracious possibilities. There were dark places, certainly. Fortune had smiled on him, but for many——

[1] Now Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Bt.

Ah, well; to full vital natures, such thoughts do not linger long at twenty-one. It is a case of "*Courage, mon ami, le diable est mort!*" Later on, he realised what a hardy old person his Satanic Majesty is!

Odd as it may sound, with his activities increasing from week to week, he always seemed to have leisure.

During his busy years at Hammersmith, a friend who saw him practically every day, declares that he never found Morris pre-occupied with his work. After a heavy day's work he would dine at seven, perhaps play thirty or forty games of backgammon with Mrs. Morris, and if friends dropped in, a game of whist. Then he would do literary work until about three, go to bed, sleep like a child, and be up early again the next morning with all a child's freshness and eagerness. He was a good sleeper as a rule, and could do with very little; yet, however short the night, he never slept in the day-time.

This leisurely activity, the absence of that nervous tension and fussiness that characterise so many literary people, may be partly accounted for by the fact that Morris was the least self-centred of men. When he passed from one occupation to another he left behind

him absolutely all the worries of that occupation. He gave his mind freshly and exclusively to the work in hand. "Going into town, old chap?" he would enquire of a friend—"Then I'll walk with you part of the way." As he swung along, he would talk enthusiastically and keenly on some topic, mutually interesting, until under pressure of time, maybe, he would hail a bus, bid his friend "so long," and before the bus was out of sight would pull a roll of manuscript out of his pocket and start writing. Much of his literary work was done on buses and in trains. He could do his work under all sorts of conditions. His study consisted of a foot or so of sitting space, a pad of paper, and anywhere as a background.

Unlike some enthusiasts, he was extraordinarily thorough in all that he undertook. The old adage, "Jack of all trades, master of none," had no terror for Morris. He defied it, and defied it successfully. But as time went on we can see a growing purpose underlying his bewildering activities. Probably it was a good thing for Morris that while he was living at the Red House, the copper-mine which had financed him so comfortably thus far, began to misbehave. Had it been otherwise, had he been a millionaire, he would have worked much the

same. That was his nature. Work to him was not a duty but a physical necessity. But he might easily have dissipated his energies over too wide an area. Need of money obliged him to concentrate more particularly. And it was in his business as a beautifier of homes and altars that he did so.

But his exuberant vitality never abated. Now, however, the object is unmistakable. It was none other than the democratisation of beauty. He had sojourned in the House Beautiful, and now he wished everyone to live there. He had wooed and won Art, and made her his comrade in his onslaught against the ugliness of Life. For a while he had sojourned in the Chamber that looked towards the East, where he could see the Delectable Mountains of Romance. But like the man in the allegory the Valley of Humiliation divided him from them; and the modern valley was the Valley of *Capitalism;* so like Christian of old he went down to meet his Apollyon; and, like Bunyan's valiant gentleman, gave his opponent some uncomfortable moments.

That was the last outlet for Morris's vitality —and the greatest. To some it may have seemed a foolhardy one. Everything depends on the point of view. Some regret that he had

not remained an artist to the end. They do not see that because he remained an artist to the end, he died in the cause of social reform.

He never seemed tired. Only during the last few months of his life did he even look so, but he would not admit it.

A few weeks before his death, an intimate friend met him in Hammersmith: "I'm done for, old man," he observed simply, with a favourite gesture of the hand. He realised then that his amazing stock of vitality had at last given out.

II

SOME CHARACTERISTICS

"I ALWAYS bless God for making anything so strong as an onion!" Morris exclaimed on one occasion. He never uttered a more characteristic remark. This passion for onions was quite as individual as his love of indigo blue and his delight in Gothic. Indeed, the affections are closely related. One of his objections to Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was the substitution for the famous onion simile of some more poetic comparison.

At the back of Morris, behind all his artistic delights, there lay a sturdy primal strain. You hear its whisper in his first volume of verse; in *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* it gives force and virility to the sweep of melody; and in his Scandinavian epic, it leaps into full deep-throated life.

The cunning of the craftsman, the restraint of the artist may hide this fact from us in some

of his handiwork. But though hidden at times, it is always latent. The vivid colouring, the stern clarity of the pattern, all bespeak this primal strain. We recall the embroidered hangings in the beautiful Red House, the house of the apple orchard, with its emblazoned scroll, "If I can!" There was a tempestuous versatility about the man. He did not pass from one occupation to another, but kept about half-a-dozen separate spheres of activity going at one and the same time; tossing them about in the palm of his hands like an adroit juggler.

People have spoken sometimes of his various forms of activity as if they were the pastimes of an exceptionally all round man. But Morris was constitutionally unable to dabble in anything. He knew that there were about a dozen methods of wearing out a man's energies, and he tried all of them.

Carlyle preached the gospel of work as the panacea for human ills. But he did so with the air of a parent who is mixing a disagreeable medicine for a child, and is insisting on its wholesome effects in order to take away attention from its nauseousness. To Morris work was a sheer joy.

It has been said that he picked out only those forms of work that were attractive.

It would be truer to say that whatever work he undertook he made attractive. It was a joy to him, because he imported beauty into it.

When his spirits flagged, it meant, not that he was tired, but that his insatiable energies cried out for even more. On one occasion when engaged on one of the later manifestations of his craftsmanship, Sir William Richmond found him a shade disconsolate. "What's the matter, Top?" he enquired. "Oh, hang it all," cried Morris, "I shall have to find out another toy." What was a toy to him would have been a life's work with some men.

This primal strain it was that drew him to the earth, and made him so profoundly restless when living in town. Sometimes he would wander about London like a kind of Ancient Mariner, seizing hold of some reluctant friend on whom to pour out the turbulent dissatisfaction of his spirit. Rossetti loved as fondly as Pope (if not precisely in his way) the "dear, damn'd, distracting Town," and occasionally, when he was lunching quietly and comfortably with a friend in some old Tavern, Topsy would come in to them, fuming and fretting, and wondering how on earth they could manage to be *comfortable* in such a dreadful hole as London. Yet it could not be said that

he hated London; indeed, in certain moods it fascinated him as it fascinates most people, however much at times they may abuse it. In any case, with that dogged pertinacity of his, he refused to leave it so long as he had work to do which was best done there. Personal preferences never stood in the way of his work. He gave up his beautiful house at Bexley Heath because the exigencies of his business made it more desirable for him to live near at hand. He sacrificed many a holiday in order to carry on his propaganda work in the drabbest and worst parts of the City; for he loved the country, and with a hearty, concrete affection. To call him a great Nature-lover would be wrong; there was nothing transcendental about his affection. It had little affinity with the worship of Wordsworth, or the ecstasy of Shelley. It was nearer to Scott's passion for the Highlands. It was a passion for places, especially the Thames Valley. The music of the Thames meant to him what the flow of the Tweed did to Scott. It was almost an animal instinct; and he felt for certain localities as some feel for certain people, an intense, personal attachment. A yellow primrose to Morris was but a yellow primrose, and he loved it all the more because of this.

Like Whitman, he was

> " . . . enamoured of growth out of doors,
> Of men that live among cattle,
> Or taste of the ocean or woods."

We recall Morris's preference for " simple folk not overburdened with the intricacies of life."

The primal strain is never better seen than in his attitude towards people. He was not a fine judge of characters, but was a sound judge of character, for he could detect insincerity or superficiality at once. Honest, straight, direct himself, these were the qualities he esteemed in others. He was not a psychologist, like Browning or Balzac, and had no love of observing human nature in its complexities. Such did not interest him. Complexities were a bore, whether in people or in books—that roughly was his attitude.

He hated cliques and coteries, and the affectations of some would-be artistic folk stirred up the primal strain with disconcerting results at times. If anyone gushed about a fine picture, Morris showed his impatience at once. " What's the use of making a damned fuss about it," he would say when the gusher had gone, " One likes a picture because it's jolly well done, and there's an end to it ! "

Once, when some of these people had been to his house, a friend found Morris muttering furiously to himself, and looking like a wild man of the woods who had been inveigled into attending a tea-party and found it had not agreed with him. The friend rallied him on the subject, and Morris went on muttering with a rich directness of vocabulary that would have horrified his anæmic visitors.

He had to suffer much at meetings from earnest people and stressful curates. "I suppose, Mr. Morris," questioned one of these gentlemen, "you have seen a good deal of poor people?" Morris growled an assent. He hated being addressed as "Mr. Morris." The speaker had asked him another of his fatuous questions previously, to which Morris had replied with exemplary patience. Impervious to his growing restlessness, the curate pursued his sing-song way. Finally, he asked, "May I ask you, Mr. Morris, have you ever sat upon a Board of Guardians?" "No, thank God!" thundered Morris, glaring at him, and thinking no doubt that one could be bored to death by tame curates as well as preached to death by wild ones.

This attitude manifested itself in another manner. It kept Morris in many ways always

the boy ; the impetuous, impulsive boy. Nicknames are often richly illuminating. Morris's was. What term could better describe that ardent, shock-headed child of genius, than *Topsy?*[1] His sense of fun was considerable, his sense of humour was more lively than subtle. It expressed itself best in simple, practical jokes and a certain rough directness of speech.

He took to genuine people at once ; the open air quality appealed to him. A man's idiosyncrasies he regarded in the nature of a superfluity.

Speaking of his friend, Mr. Cunninghame Graham, on one occasion he said how much he liked him, adding, "but he's too *b—— politeful!*" The qualification was thoroughly typical of Morris.

Next to directness in others be valued the quality of good nature. After impatiently apostrophising on one occasion Oscar Wilde's affectations, he added, "But he's jolly good-natured." It was a perfectly true criticism of Wilde, who was an essentially good-natured man, but it was an aspect seldom commented on. Oscar Wilde's brilliant wit he did not appreciate ; it was not in his line. Irony

[1] The name was taken from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and first applied to him in his Oxford days.

and satire utterly failed to appeal to him. Indeed it merely annoyed and puzzled him. His own sense of humour was of a simple, boyish description.

On the occasion of a holiday to Bruges, when a lad, with Morris and his little daughters, Sir Philip Burne-Jones recalls being awakened from a doze in the train by Morris saying with a sudden affectation of alarm: "Phil, wake up! We're in the wrong train; we're going to York!" Later in the journey he roused him again, at the close of the Channel passage, from a sleep by which the boy had sought to escape from sea-sickness, with the cheery assurance that the voyage was over, and that "the girls had been enjoying it like blazes!"

His gusto for humorous literature was considerable though limited. His delight in Dickens is well known. He was fond of reading aloud certain favourite scenes; he was partial also to the famous discourse on ghosts, in the "Rainbow" scene of *Silas Marner;* [1] and loved a good anecdote. If an amusing story appealed to him, he would ask the narrator to repeat it. "That's good—good! Now let's have it all over again."

Mr. James Leatham, a friend of Morris, has

[1] Thus—Mr. Watts-Dunton.

told us[1] how on one occasion, after a lecture on *Art in the Home*, a man in the audience enquired about a suitable decoration for a kitchen. With a twinkle in his eye, Morris rejoined immediately: "Well, to begin with, I think a flitch of bacon suspended from the ceiling is a very good decoration." On another occasion, he described a young Socialist agitator "remarkable for audacity and instability" and "deficient in the feature usually associated with determination of character," as having "less chin and more cheek than any man in the Movement." There is nothing particularly subtle about all this, but it betokens a sturdy quality of humour which served its possessor in good stead in the rough-and-tumble of life.

On the other hand, with a finer sense of humour, he would probably have found social experiences in uncongenial society a good deal more irksome.

His very tempers were like the blazing up of a hot-tempered child. He could be violent to the point of grotesqueness, but the storm was soon over, and no "ground swell" was left, as in so many cases.

One day he was playing dummy whist with

[1] *William Morris: Master of Many Crafts. A Study.* By James Leatham (New Century Press).

his wife and a friend, in his Hammersmith house, when a man on the opposite side of the river started playing the cornet, and playing it atrociously. At last Morris could bear it no longer. He threw open the window and called out: "Fool! . . ." (a pause—more music) . . . "You're the Hammersmith Fool!" The man looked up and remarked witheringly: "Put yer 'ead in at that winder!" The storm was over and Morris meekly obeyed.

Another day he was rowing up to Oxford from Kelmscott with his friend Sir William Richmond; a steam launch passed them—one of Morris's abominations. In his rage he almost kicked the bottom out of the boat, and treated the occupants of the launch to as fine a flow of Rabelaisian invective as probably they had ever heard.

Nothing could keep Morris from expressing an opinion, and a violent opinion too, on all manner of subjects. But he was never vindictive, and when the affair was over it passed out of his mind. "Life," he said to an intimate friend, "is so damned short, there's no time to quarrel with a chap!" Perhaps he would have stated his own feelings more accurately had he said there was ample time to quarrel but no

time to keep the quarrel up. He began in fury—then, put his head in.

Yet it was no easy thing for Morris to put his head in at any time. It was a much easier thing to thrust it out and apostrophise. But the withdrawal process was one of the things he learnt in his Socialist campaign.

As a rule, personal attacks were met by him with good humour. Unlike Tennyson, he was not sensitive to criticism, and he had something of Browning's genial indifference for strictures upon his work. Indeed, for literary criticism he felt considerable contempt. He read the *Athenæum* because it was the official literary organ, and he read it, he declared, as he would have read the *Ironmongers' Gazette* had he been an ironmonger. It was part of his business to do so. Of the Critic generally, he would say: "Why the devil doesn't he *do something* himself, instead of writing about what somebody else has done?"

But if personal criticism did not move him, any criticism directed against a friend aroused him at once. Someone in his hearing spoke slightingly of Burne-Jones, (thinking perhaps it might flatter him). Morris turned round in a blazing temper and treated the unfortunate commentator to a furious screed of invective.

Naturally he had strong likes and dislikes in literature and art, which he expressed with characteristic vigour.

On one occasion he had been lunching with a friend[1] at the Cock Tavern in Fleet Street, and the next day when the friend and another forgathered at the same place, a waiter remarked : " That was a loudish gent a-lunching with you yesterday, sir. I thought once you was a-coming to blows." Morris had merely been declaiming against the Elizabethan dramatists, especially Cyril Tourneur. He shouted out : " You ought to know better than to claim any merit for such work as *The Atheist's Tragedy !* " and wound up with a generalization that the use of blank verse as a poetic medium ought to be stopped by Act of Parliament for at least two generations. On another occasion, according to the same friend, he declared " that the curse of mankind was civilization, and that Australia ought to have been left to the blacks, New Zealand to the Maoris, and South Africa to the Kaffirs."

This vein of robust dogmatising reminds one of another William—William Cobbett—with whose amusingly arbitrary pronouncements

[1] Mr. Watts-Dunton. (See *Obituary notice of Morris*, in *Athenæum*.)

Morris's *obiter dicta* present a strong family likeness. One can understand readily his liking for Cobbett.

A favourite expression of his in starting one of his tirades was: "The fact of the matter is——" The listener knew then what to expect.

Despite his explosive nature and directness of speech, he was very sensitive if he imagined he had hurt another's feelings, and on one occasion, having thought that a remark he made to his sister had been unkind, he followed her out of the room, and putting his arm round her neck, said: "I hope I didn't hurt your feelings, darling, just now; I never meant to."

As with all big, elemental natures, there was a rough tang about his personality. He was sweet and sound at the core, but the sweetness savoured rather of blackberries than of honey. And some of those who met him encountered only the pips.

Many tales have been told about his fiery temper, and Rossetti, whose keen sense of humour was always stirred by his friend's excitable temperament, was not slow to elaborate these legends. As a rule, inanimate things felt the fury of his ire; rarely did he vent his feelings on persons—as many explosive people do. Smashing a chair in the manner of Mr. Patrick

Brontë, destroying one of his clay models, throwing his spectacles out of window, or twisting a fork with his strong teeth : of such material are the legends made. Nor are they so apocryphal as some recent critics have concluded.

On one occasion, when he was painting an Italian model, in Red Lion Street, someone called at the door. Morris left his painting, and presently his model heard him furiously anathematising. When he returned he was in a tremendous rage, rushing about the room like a madman. In a moment he took a flying kick at the door, and smashed in a panel. The model in fright, started to flee, but Morris turned towards him, the rage suddenly evaporating, and said genially: " It's all right—it's all right —*something* had to give way ! " The painting was then resumed.

Much, however, may be forgiven a gouty man, and that he suffered most of his life from gout, seems clear. Just before an attack, even his most intimate friends found it desirable to go slowly. When once the toe had begun to *shoot,* amiability returned, or, at any rate, comparative amiability. And he had the saving grace of being able to make fun of himself.

In a letter to his wife in 1876, Morris writes :—

> " News from here, little or none ; *e.g.* that I broke the strings of the Venetian blind in my room last night ; that no water came into the cistern on Sunday, and very little yesterday . . . *then* I was *not* the man that threw the medicine bottle at the dog, last Saturday, and was fined a shilling for that righteous indignation. . . ." [1]

Occasionally, even " righteous indignation " overcame considerations for the ordinary courtesies of life. Staying with some people in the country on one occasion, he took a dislike to the curtains over the window, and in the morning his hostess was horrified to find he had torn them down in the night. They had offended his artistic taste.

Morris, however, if volcanic, was not a really bad-tempered man or he would never have suffered so many intrusions on his time. His patience here was amazing. With a fool or a bore, as a rule, he made short shrift, though he treated idiotic questioners after his lectures with extraordinary consideration ; but an out-and-out rascal usually stood an excellent chance. He was the most unsuspicious of men,

[1] *Life of Morris*, by J. W. Mackail (Longmans).

and if the knave happened to be "agin the Government" on principle, it was a sufficient introduction to Morris's sympathies.

His very defects of temperament—a quick temper, extreme impetuosity, and an excessive sensibility to modern conditions of life—are the exaggeration of his good qualities. The whole secret of the man's power lay in his magnificently sympathetic nature. A warmness of heart and a rare tenderness of feeling gave him capacities of friendship denied to many men. Yet, though a man of many friends, it was only to a few intimates that he revealed his full nature. Tennyson referred to an acquaintance once as a "jolly, vivid man;" that was the general impression of Morris. Many knew him as a "jolly, vivid man;" one or two alone knew him as a sensitive and proud man, with a strain of great tenderness in his nature. Most companionable of men, he yet resented quickly a liberty taken with him by any but an old and trusted friend.

Both Mr. Belfort Bax and Mr. Watts-Dunton for instance, two intimate friends of his, constantly emphasize his lavishly generous disposition. This fact was brought out vividly in the extremely interesting chapter on William Morris, by Mr. James Douglas.

"When Morris published his first volume in the Kelmscott Press," wrote Mr. Douglas,[1] "he sent Mr. Watts-Dunton a presentation copy of the book. He also sent him a presentation copy of the second and third. But knowing how small was the profit at this time from the books issued by the Kelmscott Press, Mr. Watts-Dunton felt a little delicacy in taking these presentation copies, and told Mrs. Morris that she should gently protest against such extravagance. Mrs. Morris assured him that it would be perfectly useless to do so. But when the edition of *Keats* was coming out, Mr. Watts-Dunton determined to grapple with the matter, and one Sunday afternoon when he was at Kelmscott House, he said to Morris:

"'Morris, I wish you to put my name down as a subscriber to the *Keats*, and I give my commission for it in the presence of witnesses. I am a paying subscriber to the *Keats*.'

"'All right, old chap, you're a subscriber.'

"In spite of this there came the usual presentation copy of the *Keats;* and when Mr. Watts-Dunton was at Kelmscott House on the following Sunday afternoon he told Morris that a mistake had been made. Morris laughed.

[1] *Theodore Watts-Dunton*, by James Douglas (Hodder and Stoughton)

" ' All right, there's no mistake—that is my presentation copy of *Keats*.'

" But when at last the *magnum opus* of the Kelmscott Press was being discussed—the marvellous *Chaucer*, with Burne-Jones's illustrations —Mr. Watts-Dunton knew that here a great deal of money was to be risked, and probably sunk, and he said to Morris :

" ' Now, Morris, I'm going to talk to you seriously about the *Chaucer*. I know that it's going to be a dead loss to you, and I do really and seriously hope that you do not contemplate anything so wild as to send me a presentation copy of that book. You know my affection for you, and you know I speak the truth when I tell you that it would give me pain to accept it.'

" ' Well, old chap, very likely this time I shall have to stay my hand, for, between ourselves, I expect I shall drop some money over it ; but the *Chaucer* will be at The Pines, because Ned Jones and I are going to join in the presentation of a copy to Algernon Swinburne.'

" After this, Mr. Watts-Dunton's mind was set at rest, as he told Mrs. Morris. But when Mr. Swinburne's copy reached The Pines, it was accompanied by another one : ' Theodore Watts-Dunton from William Morris.'

" Another anecdote illustrative of his generosity, Mr. Watts-Dunton also tells. Mr. Swinburne, wishing to possess a copy of *The Golden Legend*, bought the Kelmscott edition, and one day Mr. Watts-Dunton told Morris this. Morris gave a start as though a sudden pain had struck him.

" ' What ! Algernon pay ten pounds for a book of mine ! Why, I thought he did not care for black-letter reproductions or I would have sent him a copy of every book I brought out.'

" And when he did bring out another book, two copies were sent to The Pines—one for Mr. Watts-Dunton and one for Swinburne."

On another occasion Morris offered to bring out Mr. Watts-Dunton's *Coming of Love*, in an edition-de-luxe, and went so far as to get a list of subscribers. He insisted, further, on allowing the author a handsome royalty. But parts of the poem had been mislaid, and until these were found Mr. Watts-Dunton refused to allow the book to be published, despite the generous offer of Morris. When the book at last was ready, poor Morris was down with his last illness.

Sometimes the note of friendship expressed itself more whimsically.

On one occasion he was down in Sussex, between Pulborough and Midhurst, walking

along a meadow with one of his Socialist friends.[1] Morris became somewhat gloomy and taciturn as was his wont on occasion, but his friend paid no attention to this, though later on, during lunch, he asked him what had been the matter?

"Did you see those cattle, old man?" enquired Morris gravely. His friend had not noticed them particularly. "I did," said Morris emphatically, "and there were some ugly customers among them, who showed a disposition to come down upon us. Well," he resumed with a twinkle in his eye—"in an emergency, I could have jumped into the stream near by, and avoided their courtesies; but you can't swim—so of course, I should have remained by you, and then," he added, with a touch of burlesque horror, "when they had charged us we should have been jolly well spitted together! Thinking about that made me a bit ruminative!"

Mr. Belfort Bax had been thinking of going to Sicily for a holiday, and spoke to Morris on the subject. "Let's go and see Richmond," says Morris; "he knows all about Sicily. He'll tell us what he thinks." So the friends took a cab and called on Sir William Blake Richmond.

The famous painter was in bed with the gout, reading Jowett's Plato, but was by no

[1] Mr. Belfort Bax.

means unwilling to leave the abstract for the concrete, and counselled Mr. Bax to give up the idea, as there were so many brigands about, that travelling there at any time was a precarious matter. As they left, Morris said: "Better leave it alone, Bax: of course, if you persist in going, I shall go with you, but I'm damned hard up at present and don't want to pay for ransoming you, as I should certainly have to do if you were captured."

Rossetti has been quoted for saying that, "Top never gives money to a beggar." How far Rossetti meant it seriously one cannot say. It is quite possible that Morris, engrossed in conversation as he often was when out walking, might have neglected a casual importunity for alms. But the number of "beggars" who called at his house and went away rewarded were legion. Mr. Belfort Bax declares that he kept a drawerful of half-crowns for foreign anarchists, because, as he explained apologetically: "They always wanted half-a-crown, and it saved time to have a stock ready." Indeed, on many occasions it was not a matter of half-a-crown, but of pounds, for anyone in need.

If he met a friend in the street by chance, it meant, as often as not, a lunch and an expensive

bottle of wine. Morris revelled in these little interludes of friendship.

Indeed, he was extravagant to a fault. But there was no indiscriminate geniality about him. He was certainly no "come to my arms" comrade of the road. When Rossetti first introduced him to Mr. Watts-Dunton, he looked at his host without regarding the visitor, and said with disconcerting brusqueness: "I thought you were going to be alone." Yet, soon after, when he was pleased by some kindred affinity in the other, nothing could exceed his warm-hearted friendliness.

III

LITERARY IDIOSYNCRASIES

PARADOXICAL as it may sound, when we recall Morris's wide and varied knowledge of mediæval life and legendary lore, he was at heart, perhaps, one of the least literary of our poets. He cared for books only as they spoke to him of Life—or Art. As a writer he has little in common with Whitman, for he respected the artistic conventions which Whitman gloried in flouting. But the two are completely at one in their attitude towards Literature. One of the self-revealing passages in *News from Nowhere* shows this clearly enough.

"Books, books, always books. . . . When will you understand that after all it is the world we live in which interests us? The world of which we are a part and which we can never love too much."

He rarely talked about books, unless the books happened to be some old illuminated

manuscripts. Next to Art, perhaps, a taste as regards fishing was the readiest introduction to his sympathies. A discussion on ground bait broke down the barrier of reserve with a stranger, and his young friends recall many a fishing expedition (for "perch-*es*," as he persisted in calling them), when he initiated them into the mysteries of the craft.

He was a voracious reader as a youth, though even then on the lines of romantic literature. Most of the family, Mrs. Gilmore says, read at meal-times. Each one brought in a book, and there was little general conversation. He delighted in ghost stories at this time, and even Scott's robust supernaturalism fascinated him. In later years, he regretted that a ghost story had lost its thrill for him: "It would be so jolly to get the *creeps* again," he told his sister, "but I suppose that time's over."

Of mediæval literature he was a master, perhaps one should say late mediæval, for he was not an Anglo-Saxon scholar, but he was decidedly eclectic in his appreciation of modern literature.

Milton and Wordsworth did not move him, and despite his admiration of Shelley's *Skylark*, he was not generally drawn towards the poet. For the literature of the eighteenth century

he had little regard. He summed the Augustan school up in one phrase, "Big-wiggery." He admired Johnson the man; but Johnson the writer he abominated. Indeed, he would gladly have sacrificed all the writings of that age, Gibbon excepted, for a page of *Huckleberry Finn*.

Among the moderns he loved Keats, and the earlier Tennyson. For Tennyson, after *Maud*, he had little care. Some of Browning's earlier work interested him greatly. Indeed, the only two reviews that he wrote in his life were on the *Men and Women* volume of Browning, which he praised warmly in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* for March, and on the 1870 volume of Rossetti's poems at the request of the editor of *The Academy*.

The later work of Browning wearied him. Even *The Ring and the Book* left him cold. "I can't make head or tail of it," he admitted. For Mrs. Browning's work he had a much warmer regard. Swinburne's early work interested him, but he was little attracted by his later writings. "He derives too much from Literature—too little from Life," he said. Pater's style bored him. He was uninterested in fine distinctions, and analysis of any kind wearied him.

Dickens he loved ; Scott he loved even more ; but the warmest place in his affection was for Dumas. Of the *Memoires* he was never tired. When jaded by a heavy day's work, Dumas never failed to soothe and distract him. Contemporary fiction scarcely touched him at all. Meredith's novels appealed to him as much as a proposition in Euclid did ; and he did not feel at home with Mr. Hardy's Wessex folk.

On one occasion Sir William Richmond mentioned Ibsen's *Master Builder*, which he himself admired. "I hate the stuff," Morris said in his definite manner. "Of course, it's a good play, the chap *could* write a play ; but it isn't literature ! "

He was a beautiful reader. When he came to see his mother he would, at her request, read the Psalms to her, and few men read them better. His deep musical voice was particularly impressive in his readings.

It has been said that he did not care for music, and Mr. William Michael Rossetti tells me that when he knew him, he had little regard for music as an Art. Certainly Morris himself denied an interest in music ; but that, Mr. Emery Walker is of opinion, was to save being bored when out for the evening. "I say 'No,'" he declared whimsically, "to avoid explanations."

The modern school failed to appeal to him—few modern developments did—but he loved the old Church music, and when a young man his whereabouts in the house could be traced by a bass voice booming out snatches of Gregorian chants. During his last illness, moreover, he took intense pleasure in having some sixteenth-century compositions played to him.

Mediæval literature he loved certainly, but not as Scott did, for its dramatic elements; not as Keats did, primarily for its pictorial richness—though this aspect appealed to him as an artist—but, at bottom, because of its vigorous humanity. The Catholic mysticism that attracted Rossetti, the glamour of mediæval and Renascence Italy, moved him not at all.

On one occasion, Mr. Walter Crane tells me, at a dinner given by the late Earl of Carlisle (then the Hon. George Howard) at Palace Green, to a group mainly of artists, the discussion turned on various schools of painting. One of the party was upholding the historical necessity of a certain foreign school. William Morris did not see the necessity and, at length, when the question was put: "How would you fill their place?" Morris cried out heartily: "Oh, stuff it up with straw!" which has

the merit of finality, if not especially illuminating.

Classic architecture never moved him. A Greek temple, he complained, was "like a table on four legs: a damned dull thing!"

He was a poor traveller, hating hotels and being on the move; nor was he interested, generally speaking, in foreign lands. Iceland appealed to him, and southern England, and France; but his tours in Italy—passing through Switzerland as quickly as possible—left him cold. One of his friends showed him some paintings of striking Egyptian scenes, but he displayed little interest in them. "Jolly pretty," he would say genially, but with nothing of the fiery enthusiasm he showed when his imagination was appealed to. Sir Joshua Reynolds' work he sweepingly referred to as "hot, greasy daubs," probably agreeing with Rossetti's opinion of "*Sir Sloppitty Reynolds.*"

There was a frank and hearty materialism in his outlook both on history and letters. His ideal age was the fifteenth century, simply because that was the age of the handicrafts, when workmen took a joy in their work. There was no subtlety in his nature, he was not a mystic, and, despite his strong primal feeling, nothing of that complex passionate intensity

associated with the South. There was a strain of Northern asceticism and Northern simplicity in his nature.

"Even in those magnificent and wonderful towns," he writes after a tour South, "I long rather for the heap of grey stones with a grey roof that we call a house, North way."

There was a strain of asceticism, I have said, but it was not the ecclesiastic asceticism of the Middle Ages. This had no appeal for him. He gloried in the natural instincts and loved the body as truly, if less fervently, than Rossetti did. But, with all this, there is that stoical reserve, that virile reticence, that horror of hysterical emotion, that we identify with Northern latitudes.

Deep down in his nature was a strain of almost womanly tenderness, though he rarely showed it; and if under stress of sudden emotion it welled up, he would quickly fall back on reserve. As a rule his manner was genial, but on the whole he was undemonstrative.

Circumscribed as his artistic sympathies may have been, his interests were legion. He multiplied his occupations with a lightning versatility as amazing as his particular aptitude. He would write a score or so of lines before breakfast, just as some men would go for a run.

He would pass from a tapestry to dyeing and from dyeing to an epic, with equal pleasure, and, one may add, with equal facility. Sometimes he turned away friends who called just as he was about to write, but there was nothing of the hypersensitiveness of a dyspeptic Carlyle about him. No sound-proof study was needed: "You've got to clear out—I'm going to write," was the laconic greeting.

Often, however, he would put his work aside, not from politeness, but because he welcomed the interrupter.

"Where are you going, Mary?" (to Miss Mary de Morgan).

"I thought you were busy writing poetry."

"What the devil has that got to do with it? Sit down and tell me a tale!"[1]

On another occasion he was travelling by train with a friend, in the north of England, and his eye fell upon some old-fashioned house, not far from the railway. Instantly his chatter ceased, he pulled out pencil and paper, and started what proved to be a long and important poem. He wrote for a couple of hours, then there was a halt for lunch. Morris embarked with animation and cheerful detachment upon other topics. Then later on he resumed his

[1] *Life of William Morris*, by J. W. Mackail (Longmans).

poem, writing in the most uncomfortable positions and with distractions around him, but not the least embarrassed by these. His power of concentration was phenomenal.

Morris had nothing of the professional writer about him. He was, as I have said, a genuine man of the world in the best sense of that much-abused term. Most heartily would he have subscribed to Byron's fling:

> "One hates an author that's *all author*, fellows
> In foolscap uniforms turned up with ink,
> So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous,
> One don't know what to say to them, or think,
> Unless to puff them with a pair of bellows;
> Of coxcombry's worst coxcombs e'en the pink
> Are preferable to these shreds of paper,
> These unquench'd snuffings of the midnight taper."

His own individuality was so sturdy and vigorous that the personal influences in his life were not considerable. Two of his contemporaries, however, counted for much in certain directions: Rossetti and Ruskin.

Ruskin's influence, which was the earlier of the two, was, on the whole, the more permanent; Rossetti's, while it lasted, the more dominant.

For Ruskin he always had a reverential affection; and the affectionate attachment was certainly mutual. Ruskin referred to Morris's

verse once as "beaten gold," and paid a fine tribute to his strength of personality. Morris was boyishly delighted when he heard this. "Let's have a bottle of Tokay up, and celebrate," was his comment.

Sir William Richmond tells me that at an Art Congress in Edinburgh, R. M. Stevenson referred slightingly to Ruskin's work and teaching. Morris responded, "That's all nonsense! Why, man, Ruskin has made Art possible for us!"

Ruskin's influence is, of course, perfectly obvious even to those only slightly acquainted with Morris's views. It lay almost entirely in the way in which he co-related Art and Social Reform. It was an ethical influence. Rossetti's influence, on the other hand, was largely a matter of personal magnetism; and for a while Morris was almost overwhelmed by it. In later life, however, the psychological differences between the two men led almost to estrangement. In addition to this, the last darkened years of the unhappy poet had necessarily strained their friendly relationship yet further. But despite all this, Morris always spoke in a warm-hearted way about him, referring to Rossetti's kindness to young men, and frankly acknowledged his splendid contribution to the Renascence of Art.

His most considerable friendship, with Burne-Jones, was due very largely to their similarity of outlook in Art matters. Each man kept his ideal of Art on a plane by itself, suffering nothing to interfere with it. This was the bond that united them. Their views on most other matters were often well weighed. Each man rigorously excluded the quality of humour from his Art expression, though both were lively and whimsical enough in disposition; and Burne-Jones, whose Art is even more austere than Morris's, excelled him in fun and high spirits. It may be questioned whether this deliberate exclusion of humour did not give a certain monotony to Morris's work at times, just as it did to Rossetti's, for on this point the three men resembled one another.[1] Morris, of the three, suffered the most from its exclusion. There was little room for it, perhaps, in his verse; but the beautiful prose romances might have gained in subtlety and variety by an occasional flash of humour.

Much has been written of the "eternal boy" in Stevenson; though Henley's suggestion of Ariel, Hamlet, and the Shorter Catechist

[1] There is one poem of Rossetti's in which his sense of humour breaks out if somewhat grimly, i.e. "Jan Van Hunks," published in the *English Review*, January, 1909, by permission of Mr. Watts-Dunton.

seems much more to the point. In his lighter moods there is an elfin note about Stevenson which is scarcely hearty and simple enough to be termed boyish. Far truer would it be to speak of the "eternal boy" in Morris. For Morris in some respects never grew up at all. There was a rough, jovial simple-heartedness about him in all his doings. His culture rode lightly upon him. At College nothing surprised his companions more than to find the wealth of his intellectual equipment; and deeply read in certain directions and brilliantly versatile in every Art direction as he was throughout his life, it seemed to exude from him in a jolly, genial, casual manner as if, to adopt Lamb's whimsical tribute to Coleridge's metaphysics, it was "merely his fun."

There was a boyish awkwardness about him too. He tumbled about his friends' rooms with a curious aptitude for knocking things over. This characteristic gave infinite delight to his friends, who were for ever chaffing him. He was a ready butt for good-natured jokes; and Dante Gabriel Rossetti never tired of playing pranks with him.

Boyish in his enthusiasms; boyish in his restless activities; boyish in his friendships; and yet at the back of all this ebullience of youth

were the stern, steady purpose and clear outlook of the man who has passed through much and felt many things. Though when all is said, young at heart to the very end, ready to throw his cap into the ring and punch the world on the head—the City world especially—on the least provocation. Fiery and militant whenever his sympathies were excited, with not a particle of malice in his constitution.

There is certainly a boyish relish about some of his letters to Sir Philip Burne-Jones, when the latter was a small boy. This, for instance :

"26, QUEEN SQUARE,
"BLOOMSBURY, LONDON.
"*October 18th*, 186–.

"MY DEAR PHIL,

"I suppose you would like to know something about Jenny and May as you haven't seen them for some time ; they are very well, and have been riding on donkeys over Hampstead Heath ; the sum of 5 shillings have they dissipated in that amusement, 5 shillings each, I mean : the house at Hampstead is like a rabbit warren because of the kids therein ; only kids make more noise than rabbits ; I was so incautious the other day as to wish, aloud, that one of their young friends was in the water butt with the

lid shut down on her; and Jenny and May said they would tell her; so I have gained an enemy, if a small one; her name is Isabella, and she can just make a noise!

"Well, I suppose you are coming home soon; I shall be very glad to see you—Shake hands with Margaret for me.

"I am

"Your affectionate

"UNC."

Here surely is another boyish touch, though Mr. Thackeray Turner,[1] who relates it, declines to see the pleasant juvenile element. In his opinion, there was nothing boyish about Morris.

Morris came bustling in late to a committee meeting of the S.P.A.B., and almost at once started telling a story. The Secretary called the attention of the Chairman to the length of the agenda, and Morris was called to order. Later on Morris made another attempt, with the same result. However, he became more and more restless, and at last said: "I shall burst if you do not let me tell my story, but if allowed, I will be so good afterwards." The story was the well-known one of a clerk in a certain Public Department being called upon to explain why he had charged fourpence for

[1] A leading spirit of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

porter, as refreshments were not allowed. On explaining that it was for carrying luggage, he was told it should have been booked as *porterage*. Later on the same clerk was again called upon to give an explanation as to a charge of eighteenpence for *cabbage*, whereupon he replied: "I was told to call porter, porterage; so I supposed I was right to call cab, cabbage!"

His gusto for life was as great as was Hazlitt's for literature. The moody, captious Hazlitt had little in common personally with Morris, though their literary tastes had certain points of resemblance. But each admitted at the end that Life had been a good thing. "I have enjoyed my life," said Morris to an intimate friend; "few more so, and death in any case is sure." Later on he reiterates the joy that Life had given to him.

Perhaps his most distinctive utterance on Life and its meaning was given to Sir William Richmond on one occasion. "The fact of the matter is, old man," he said, starting with his characteristic phrase, "Life is a progressive series of efforts; there are so many things to do, and to get to know about; and when these things are done, we don't want to worry about them. We had best leave 'em alone, and pass on to something else. And then, at the close

of Life, we get to know a few things tolerably well."

He hated reiteration. The thing done, he passed to something else; the thing said, he would turn the talk in other directions.

Like all large, simple natures, he found his mightiest inspiration in the Earth; the green grass, the brooding sky, the wind among the willows; the light playing on the water.

There is a passage in Jefferies to which Morris would have responded with all his heart:

"I stood where the foam came to my feet, and looked out over the sunlit waters. The great earth bearing the richness of the harvest, and its hills golden with corn, was at my back; its strength and firmness under me. The great sun shone above, the wide sea was before me. The wind came sweet and strong from the waves. The life of the earth and the sea, the glow of the sun filled me; I touched the surge with my hand, I lifted my face to the sun; I opened my lips to the wind. I prayed aloud in the roar of the waves—my soul was strong as the sea, and prayed with the sea's might. Give me fulness of life like to the sea and the sun, and to the earth and the air; give me fulness of physical life, mind equal and beyond their fulness . . . give it to me with all the force of the sea."

"All the Force of the Sea!" That also was Morris's *élan vital!*

His last visit from home was spent at the beautiful old-world house of Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, in the heart of Sussex. This sketch of the man and his ways may fittingly conclude with an account of that last visit in Mr. Blunt's own words written for this work.

I find by my diary of the time that William Morris's visit to me here at Newbuildings was from Tuesday, May 26th, to Saturday, May 30th, 1896. He was already very ill, having lost weight rapidly during the past few months, and being troubled with a cough which alarmed me, though the doctors talked of it still as the effect of nervous exhaustion.

I had often stayed with him at Kelmscott Manor, but this was his first visit to me and the first to the Weald of Sussex, and he was interested in the oak woods just then in their spring glory. He had been brought up in Epping Forest, but the oak country, in the centre of which Newbuildings stands, was, he told me, new to him, and he was curious about it as an addition to his otherwise great knowledge of country things. Each morning he went out with me to a seat in the wood behind the house within easy reach of his feeble steps, where he was able to enjoy the singing of the

birds, and compare notes with me on matters connected with woodcraft. He was interested, too, in this old house, which had escaped modernising, and, though much depressed on arrival, his spirits rose rapidly and his talk became at times as brilliant as ever. It was, I think, his last short period of physical enjoyment of the country, almost free from pain.

During this visit I had more talk with him than ever before, on the fundamental problems of life, art, social politics, religion, and science. Morris had long ceased to be an adherent of any religious creed, and his philosophy was a material one. But he was no pessimist about human nature, and still believed mankind to be the "roof and crown of things," in spite of its destructive character and its modern craze of ugliness. Morris's Socialism had very little to do with the received tenets of its political professors. It was essentially æsthetic and in a sense reactionary. Violent though it was against the evils of modern capitalism, it was a lament for the past rather than a programme for the future. It had no modern constructive plan. "It will be time enough," he more than once told me, "to think of that when we shall have made a clean sweep of present conditions." His ideal would have been a faithful reconstruction of the past. He had little belief in the wisdom of local Bodies representing Self-Government, or confidence

in the courage of the masses, especially of the London masses. These had disappointed him at the time of the Trafalgar Square riot, and for the last few years of his life, the time when I saw most of him, he was to a large extent disenchanted with Socialism as a practical political creed. He had returned from it to his earlier worship of art, poetry, and the beautiful in craftsmanship, and was weary of the rest. The success of his Kelmscott Press venture consoled him for many disappointments in his evolutionary teaching. In all this I sympathised with him, and in his strong anti-Imperialism and hatred of modern inhumanities.

In argument, Morris was large-minded and tolerant of contradiction, so long as it was with persons who knew what they were talking about and did not attempt to pass half-statements on him as whole-truths. But nobody was more impatient of superficial knowledge than he, or quicker to detect a flaw in reasoning or an insincerity. With the common small-talk of society he lost his temper quickly, and did not scruple to be rude to the flattery even of fine ladies who might venture on it with him. He declined to waste his time on them, and he was the only man I ever came in contact with who seemed absolutely independent of sex considerations. He would talk in precisely the same tone to a pretty woman as to a journeyman carpenter—that is to say, he would be interested

if she had anything interesting to tell him, but not for a minute longer. It may have been otherwise in his earlier life, but it is as such I remember him. In his last years his work absorbed him to the exclusion of all else and made him difficult of access to anyone unconnected with it. Though the least selfish of men in the ordinary sense of the word (for he was quite un-self-indulgent), he became perhaps the most self-centred, the work he was on shutting out every other thought. For this reason his illness was a severer blow to him than it would have been to most men. When he found he could no longer grapple with his work he gave up the struggle to live. Life in itself was not a sufficient motive. He had work enough, he said, to last him twenty years, and here was this sudden inability to go on with it. His visit to Newbuildings seemed for the moment to have done him good, and when he left me it was with a plan of our taking a short driving tour together in Epping Forest during the summer—alas, it was not to be !

I saw him again some weeks later at Folkestone, and had some further interesting talk with him about his early life, which my diary briefly gives : his schooldays at Marlborough, a record of his parentage. But these, I think, have all been described in Mackail's excellent Life of him, so I will not trouble you with detailing them. His voyage to Spitzbergen

that summer was a sick man's fancy that his health would come back to him in a climate where he had enjoyed it once in abundance; but it ended disastrously. I only saw him once after his return, when, September 28th, I dined at Kelmscott House. But, alas, he was too feeble to sit through the dinner. He seemed dazed and unable to follow the conversation, and soon left the table. He died five days later, October 3rd.

I consider Morris's to have been the strongest intellect I have had the good fortune to come into close contact with during my life. His range of knowledge was the widest, his reasoning power the keenest and his capacity for work. His artistic influence on the generation to which I belong has been, I think, greater, and will probably be more lasting, than that of any of his contemporaries, though both Swinburne and Rossetti were technically his superiors in verse; and his supremacy in imaginative art was confined to those of the craftsman. He had a larger outlook on the world than any of the Pre-Raphaelite group, a more powerful brain, a more persistent purpose in the work achieved.

NEWBUILDINGS PLACE, SUSSEX,
January 15th, 1913.

PART II

THE POET

IV

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

"Love is enough: ho ye who seek saving,
Go no farther: come hither; there have been who have found it,
And these know the house of Fulfilment of Craving;
These know the Cup with the roses around it;
These know the World's Wound and the balm that hath bound it:
Cry out, the World heedeth not, 'Love, lead us home!'"

MORRIS was a great artist who wrote verse as one of the many media for expressing his innate sense of beauty. He was not a great poet; for to the great poet rhythmic beauty is the one and inevitable expression of his creative imagination. It was certainly a moot point, at times, whether the outcome of his inspiration would be in words or fabric. His well-known dictum that a man who was unable to turn from an epic to a tapestry had better leave both alone, is finely characteristic. He could do either so well that he often merged the one into the other. He wove his epic with the craftsman's cunning, and threw a lyric into a mural decoration.

He had as little belief in inspiration as Anthony Trollope. He wrote straight away and, if dissatisfied with the result, put the work aside as he might a bungled pattern, and started afresh. But careful revision was not his *métier*.

The method is typical of the man. His best work reads like happy improvisations. An aptitude for verse-making he always had; a rare knowledge and quick mastery of metrical forms were his almost from the beginning, and his fine, unerring instinct for beauty kept him from the sterile pitfalls of the fluent rhymester.

But if not a great poet, he was unmistakably a genuine one; and in one respect he excelled some of our greatest. There is no poet whose work is more remarkable for its level excellence. If the consummate artistry of Tennyson were beyond his reach, he was equally removed from the taint of tawdriness, and even in his earliest work there is none of the glaring crudity that stamps Keats' *Endymion*.

Much has been written about the formative influences that helped to fashion his poetry, and undue importance has been attached to some of these, the influence in particular of Chaucer and Rossetti.

The influence of Pre-Raphaelite art generally, and of Rossetti's *paintings* in particular,

undoubtedly can be traced in his earliest volume of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere*. Rossetti's poetry, despite certain superficial similarities, moves on another plane from that of Morris's.

Each writer certainly was drawn to mediæval story and legend for his inspiration, but from the first the treatment is entirely individual; and when Morris was firmly fixed in the narrative form which suited his personality so well —*The Earthly Paradise* for instance—the verse of the two friends differed as widely as the poetry of Scott and Coleridge.

Rossetti loved the Middle Ages for their mysticism; Morris for their human elements. Rossetti's poetry is for the most part characterised by elaboration and subtlety; Morris's by simplicity and directness. Rossetti loved rich Latinized words; Morris's preference for a Saxon or Danish vocabulary was almost fanatical.

Again, his admiration for Chaucer so frankly and warmly expressed in the prologue to *The Earthly Paradise*, has led some to imagine that a far greater artistic affinity united the poets than was actually the case.

Morris, like Chaucer, knew the secret of telling a good story, lucidly and simply; like

Chaucer, moreover, there is a frank objectivity about his work. The intense self-consciousness of the artist so characteristic of most modern singers, was quite absent in Morris. There is that ease, that naturalness, that comfortable fertility which marks *The Canterbury Tales*.

But as regards the treatment of their subjects, the two poets have nothing in common. Morris's rich vein of fancy finds no counterpart in Chaucer; and the abundant humour of *The Canterbury Tales* is entirely absent in Morris's work. Morris's imagination reflects the serious, primal passion of the North; while Chaucer is saturated with the literary graces of France.

There are traces in some of the earlier poems, as there are in every young poet, of individual literary influences; a touch of Spenser, an attitude of Browning. But these are slight—slighter far than the influence of Shelley on Browning; of Keats on the youthful Tennyson. The most considerable influence upon Morris's poetry is the influence of the Scandinavian mythology, which supplied the raw material of some of his best work.

After that, the Thames Valley proved the most potent inspiration. Places rather than persons seem to dominate his imagination;

and he probably owed more to the waterscape and meadowland round Kelmscott than to any poet that ever lived.

" It has come to be the type," he wrote, " of the pleasant places of the earth and of the homes of harmless, simple people not overburdened with the intricacies of life, and as others love the race of man through their lovers, or their children, *so I love the Earth through that small space of it.*"

The italics are mine.

The distinctive feature of Morris's early work lies in its assertive individuality. Written at a time when he was in whole-hearted allegiance to Tennyson, and dominated in artistic sympathies by the imperious personality of Rossetti, this individual note is the more surprising. In method of presentment there is much to divide the story-teller of *The Earthly Paradise* and the apologist of *Guenevere:* but the point of view, the general outlook, was always the same.

Immaturity may mark the early manner; the matter shows sane virility from the start.

The first thing to strike the reader, then, is the vigorous individuality of the Poet. There is a new note in the song, a note that owes little to the music of its predecessors. It was not so

unmistakably new as Whitman's, for Whitman broke away entirely from poetic conventions; while Morris, however radical his outlook might be, was always a conservative in art; but none the less the note was new and fresh and original.

Compare the scenic settings of Morris's with those of any other modern poet, and their unlikeness and distinctiveness will be realised at once.

Tennyson, for instance, whose love of Southern England was as strong as Morris's, has given us this memorable vignette:

> "An English Home—gray twilight poured,
> On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
> Softer than sleep, all things in order stored
> A haunt of ancient Peace."

This is Morris:

> ". . . There is wind in the twilight; in the white road before us,
> The straw from the Oxyard is blowing about;
> The moon's rim is rising, a star glitters o'er us,
> And the vane on the spire-top is swinging in doubt."

A less individual poet would certainly have striven to achieve something of the rhythmic distinction that Tennyson rarely fails to impart. A less original artist would have shrunk from

that second line. Morris, to whom every detail in the landscape is beautiful in a definite manner, gives his verse a freshness and directness peculiarly its own.

How utterly different from the exquisite distinction of Tennyson's. For the moment it may seem a careless, commonplace piece of verse. Yet it is neither the one nor the other.

There is an obvious something that differentiates Morris at the outset from the other great Victorian poets. His work shows no trace of what may be called "the grand manner." Those felicities of phrasing that give so compelling a charm to Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, often even to Browning, are nowhere to be found. Lovers of Gems of Poetry, who have no difficulty in finding a rich garner in contemporary poets, are hard put to it when they come to Morris. The fascination of the grand manner lies in the inalienable magic of association that it imparts to particular phases of imaginative experience. At its best it is unapproachable: we are enthralled by its "fine excess."

Putting aside such great masters of the perfect phrase as Shakespeare and Milton: the literature of the last century can furnish us with wealth enough in this respect.

Night brings before the mind Tennyson's exquisite simile :

> " Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind,
> And in her bosom bore the baby sleep " ;

or the challenging splendour of Browning's :

> " Night has her first, supreme, forsaken star."

Music recalls the lovely line from the *Grecian Urn* :

> " Heard melodies are sweet ; but those unheard are sweeter."

Summer !—How the poets tumble over one another in their rhythmic offerings to Summer ; yet among them has any surpassed Wordsworth's :

> " Flaunting summer when he throws
> His soul into the briar rose."

The magic of the ocean speaks to us in Rossetti's :

> " And her far seas moan as a single shell " ;

and more poignantly in Arnold's :

> " The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea."

But there are singularly few memorable lines in Morris's copious verse ; and the one most quoted—the " idle singer of an empty day "—has in reality little of the true Morris flavour about it. The distinguishing quality of Morris's

poetry is its atmospheric charm. There is a fragrant equality about the blossoms; but if we expect rare blooms we shall expect in vain. We look for special view points and there are none. His "peak in Darien" is merely a pleasant hill-top.

It is so simple, lucid, and straightforward, that we almost forget it is poetry; the verse runs on with the smooth melody of Tennyson's brook. Not least among its charms is the sense of reserve power which seems always present. When it ceases, it is like the receding of the tide, not as the drying up of a stream.

A mere casual chat with the man might lead one to expect from him rugged, direct verse of the Browning order. But when the dreamer side of Morris was appreciated, as it was by his intimates, then the artistic eclecticism of the man and his passionate love of beauty would fully prepare one for the smooth-flowing cadences.

"Rudely the verse being as the mood it paints"

was a precept which would have made him shudder.

V

THE EARLY WORK

IN 1858 *The Defence of Guenevere* was published. It contains a number of verse Romances, several dealing with the Arthurian Legends—all more or less reflecting a love of mediævalism in art and literature.

It is a remarkable volume for a young poet, and deserves more attention than is usually accorded it. Broadly speaking the verses fall into two classes: Psychological romances and Fantastic romances. In the latter the young poet flings himself into his work with gusto. One of his intimates tells us how he used to enjoy chanting these verses aloud to his friends. He plays with words and rhythms with the delight of a child using a new toy. A natural aptitude for metrical experiments leads him to exult in essaying as many forms as he can. *The Wind—The Blue Closet—The Tune of Seven Towers—Two Red Roses across the Moon*

Fantasies of this type are written with a kind of breathless enjoyment in their pictorial and melodious qualities, and a buoyant disregard of any ulterior meaning.

Both Scott and Rossetti took this class of work more seriously than Morris. Scott infused into it vigour and actuality. Rossetti threw over it the glamour of mysticism.

Morris reserves his vigour and actuality for narrative work. Poems of this order are with him obviously larks by the way. Nor had he that faculty of mysticism that Rossetti possessed in so high a degree.

Compare for instance his pretty fantasy *Two Red Roses across the Moon* with Rossetti's *Sister Helen :*

> " There was a lady lived in a hall,
> Large in the eyes, and slim and tall ;
> And ever she sung from noon to noon,
> *Two red roses across the moon.*
>
> " There was a knight came riding by
> In early spring, when the roads were dry ;
> And he heard that lady sing at the noon—
> *Two red roses across the moon.*
>
> " Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
> And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,
> He rode on the spur till the next warm noon :—
> *Two red roses across the moon.*"

This is Rossetti :

" ' Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen.'
The moon flies face to face with me.
' Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother.'
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven ?)

" ' Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen ;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.'
' Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother ? '
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven ?)

" ' I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly.'
' Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother ? '
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven ?) "

Rossetti uses his refrain as a spell ; for him it is a mystic symbol, and he has something of the eerie power of which Coleridge was so superb a master. For Morris it is merely a splash of colour, a snatch of melody, an effective trick he uses with boyish glee.

At the same time, these pieces of Morris's have

an undeniable charm and grace of their own, and one or two, *The Wind* for instance, show extraordinary metrical skill for so inexperienced a writer. It is manifestly unfair, however, to compare them as they have been compared, with Rossetti's romances, and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, of Keats. They have neither the mystical subtlety of Rossetti nor the pagan magic of Keats' wonderful poem.

The term "mysticism" is often applied to Morris's work, especially his early verse; but surely, there are few romantic poets less mystical. Mysticism is not a question of subject-matter, but of a special standpoint. One may dream dreams and see visions without being a Jacob. One of the points of difference between Morris and Rossetti during the latter years of Rossetti's life was on this mystical element, which meant so much to the latter.

"Such nonsense!" Morris would mutter in impatient disgust, when told a ghost story by a more impressionable friend. "Such awful nonsense!"

For spiritualism he had as hearty a dislike as the author of *Sludge the Medium*. He looked upon it as so much hocus-pocus, and was inclined to regard those who engaged in it as

so many mountebanks. In fact there were very definite limits to his imagination.

Obviously then, one cannot look upon Morris as in any sense a mystic. The use of the supernatural in his poetry and prose was entirely a literary convention. He was too sensitive an artist not to see its pictorial possibilities. What does it mean to Morris? just as much as a strip of gold brocade, or an ingenious pattern.

Rapunzel is in a different category. It is an old fairy legend such as Morris loved, and does not depend on any mystic atmosphere for its effectiveness. It is treated by him with a grace, delicacy, and a simplicity that at times suggest Maeterlinck.

Moreover, there are little human touches in the poem which revealed the poet's heart, as is always the case with the work he liked best and did best.

Rapunzel, like Melisande, stands at the top of the tower, letting down her hair to the ground, and her lover climbs up to her as by a golden stair.

The setting is a perfect Pre-Raphaelite picture:

> "Is there any who will dare
> To climb up the yellow stair,
> Glorious Rapunzel's golden hair?"
>
> . . . . . .

"... But shall we not depart from hence?
The white moon groweth golden fast, and gleams
Between the aspen stems; I fear—and yet a sense
Of fluttering victory comes over me,
That will not let me fear aright; my heart—
Feel how it beats, love, strives to get to thee,
I breathe so fast that my lips needs must part."

On a higher level are the psychological romances. Some of these, in particular the Arthurian fragment *The Defence of Guenevere*, and *King Arthur's Tomb*, are masterly in conception, but their effect is largely stultified by the clumsy framework. Morris had no gift for monologue, and in using this form in which Browning excels, he crippled his powers. When, however, he discards the monologue form and adopts direct, straightforward narrative, his special strength flashes out at once.

In conception, all these psychological romances are much on the same level of excellence; but the lucidity, the grip, the poignancy of the *Haystack in the Floods*, reveal clearly enough where Morris is to excel. Even here in this early attempt at narrative poetry he shows himself already a master hand, and the poem will compare favourably with his best work.

The Knight Robert is escaping from Paris with the Lady Jehane, whose chastity has been

challenged. The fugitives are followed and run down by a haystack in the floods. The man who seizes them, Godmar, is a brutal, sensual man, who is enamoured of Jehane and desires her for himself. She is given the choice of living with him or returning to meet her fate in Paris; and she has an hour in which to consider her fate. Worn out, she sleeps the hour in the wet hay, and then:

> "Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
> And strangely childlike came, and said:
> 'I will not'" . . .

The man, the lover, watches the scene, dazed and desperate. He longs to touch the pale, wild-eyed girl, to give her a farewell kiss, but he is too securely bound:

> ". . . he tried once more
> To touch her lips; she reached out, sore
> And vain desire so tortured them,
> The poor grey lips, and now the hem
> Of his sleeve brush'd them."

Godmar brings matters to a swift issue. Furious at his repulse, he kills Robert on the spot in front of the girl, with every show of brutal ferocity. Then is portrayed the sudden collapse of the girl—a collapse of mind as well as of body. The scene has been too terrible

for her and we leave her with the childish, empty smile of the insane upon her lips.

I have left to the last the Arthurian fragment, because although unequal in workmanship either to *Rapunzel,* or to *The Haystack in the Floods,* it is the most characteristic contribution to the volume. One has only to compare it with the Arthurian tale as retold by Tennyson, to realise its originality.

There is breadth and virility in Morris's setting, which is missing in Tennyson. His Guenevere is a more human character than Tennyson's Queen.

Tennyson's exquisitely wrought *Idylls* have one grave defect. They are too obviously sentimentalised and civilised. They do not reflect the passions and crude superstitions of a barbaric age.

There are noble passages certainly; tender idylls like that of *Elaine,* impressive word-pictures like the *Passing of Arthur,* but there is far more of the stuff of humanity in Morris. The story of Launcelot and Guenevere serves Tennyson as an opportunity for picturesque moralising. It certainly does not bring out the poignant passion as Morris brings it out in his meeting of the lovers beside the tomb of Arthur.

The strength and beauty of Launcelot's character, the fierceness and devotion of his love for Guenevere mingling with his no less ardent devotion for King Arthur, the agony of soul in Guenevere, raving that she has sinned; yet ever in her broken words of despair round the tomb, unable to subdue the intensity of her love for Launcelot. All these things are portrayed with a force and vigour one cannot praise too much.

The psychology of the distraught Guenevere is splendidly pictured:

> "And every morn I scarce could pray at all,
> For Launcelot's red-golden hair would play,
> Instead of sunlight, on the painted wall,
> Mingled with dreams of what the priest did say."

The real tragedy of Guenevere is, that she loved both Arthur and Launcelot. The Arthur of the legend was not the cold and somewhat priggish Arthur of Tennyson's poems, but a character as rich in nobility and lovable human qualities as Launcelot himself. Hence the bitterness of Guenevere's contrition. All three are great characters, and this makes their marred lives the more pitiful. The mediæval religious temper, where unquestioning belief and fear of hell co-exist with fleshly love, is equally well brought out:

" If ever I go to hell, I cannot choose
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Launcelot ; O Christ ! must I lose
My own heart's love ? . . ."

Taking the two poems of Morris's dealing with Guenevere, one is struck by the self-detachment of Morris. In the earlier poem, *The Defence*, we have a glorious, vital picture of a voluptuous and regal woman. In the second, at *King Arthur's Tomb*, an equally vital picture of a despairing, remorseful, agonising woman. But each picture is true to the Catholic imagination of the age. Morris was saturated with the old tales, and equally at home in every aspect of Catholic legend lore. It was no effort for him, as it was for Tennyson, to step out of the century in which he lived. Tennyson, deeply versed as he was in classical and mediæval literature, was essentially modern in his outlook and temperament.

Such was the experimental period of verse-writing, a period rich in promise, disclosing a marked individuality of outlook ; but like all experimental periods, with not a few blind passages in it. It had served its purpose, had shown Morris what he could do and what he could not do. In the next venture there is all

the sureness and deftness of the writer who knows his measure.

Poetry falls naturally into three great divisions, and the genuine poet instinctively chooses that mode which suits best his temperament. These three modes are the epic, or narrative form, the dramatic, or psychological form, and the lyric, or single emotional form. It has been averred that in the first two forms the poet adopts an objective standard, meaning presumably by that, a portrayal of incident and character with no reference to the poet's own personal idiosyncrasies and characteristics; but in the last form, he is subjective and personal, expressing his own personality.

I must confess that this point of view puzzles me. Frankly objective art seems a contradiction in terms. Surely all art is the expression in terms of beauty—whether of form, colour, sound, or words—of the artist's own personality and temperament. No man can look on the world save through the windows of his own soul; and these windows are necessarily tinted by his prepossessions and peculiarities. "The objective artist paints life as it is," says the critic! *As it is!* But who on earth can tell what life really is? He only can see it as it presents itself to him.

The three modes of poetical art are, however, not divergent, but merely various ways of painting life. The lyric poet gives us a single mood or emotion expressed in a particular metre or rhythm which imaginatively suggests that mood or emotion. The dramatic poet does not give us directly his own feelings, but in his very choice of characters and his power of presenting them, indirectly reveals his own character and personality. Like Shakespeare, he breaks himself up into little bits, giving us glimpses of himself in Falstaff, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, Antony, or Prospero. The moods and psychological sympathies become incarnate. The conflicts of passion, desire, and weakness in his own soul are projected into a crowded arena.

Having served his poetical apprenticeship in experimentalising, as most poets do, Morris turned instinctively to the mode that suited best his own personality—the narrative.

Life interested him as a pageant of the primal qualities; he was not intensely interested in the concrete embodiment of these passions, as was Shakespeare, nor curious about the reaction of the passions upon the intellect, as was Browning. For this reason his characters, though alive, in a large elemental way,

are left rather as spirited sketches than as full-length portraits. We see them as lovers and fighters. We realise clearly enough, the intensity of their affection, their capacity for courage and endurance; and beyond that we know next to nothing about them. We have very little notion even as to what they are like, beyond being healthy and beautiful, or deformed and malignant; and this is all that Morris cares about telling us.

That he had no psychological power, it would be unfair to say. There are sufficient indications in the Guenevere poems, for instance, to the contrary. But that these matters did not greatly interest him is unquestionable, otherwise his treatment would have been different in all his greatest work. *Jason,* and *The Earthly Paradise,* are voluminous poems—narratives within narratives—all dealing in this general way with life. He seizes upon a few primal qualities, illustrates them, and for the rest the legend and romance is a mere scenic accessory.

Narrative poetry is particularly suited to this line of treatment. Yet it might well have been thought a risky matter to have attempted it on so large a scale as Morris did, without giving it the light and shade of humorous by-

play, such as we find in *The Canterbury Tales*. The narrative poetry of Marlowe and Scott dispenses with humour, it is true, but after all, Marlowe's contribution is little more than a splendid fragment, and Scott's vigorous and spirited verse is not of the first order.

Eschewing all the effects that humour can supply, Morris, by sheer grace and sweetness, succeeds in making his long poem one of sustained persuasive charm from beginning to end. There are no cheap tricks to gain our attention, nothing especially daring in the treatment of the story. It succeeds by its clarity and beauty. That is the whole secret.

VI

THE MIDDLE PERIOD

THE story of Jason and the Quest of the Golden Fleece, and of the love and jealousy of Medea, is one of those world-old pagan tales that grips the imagination and holds the fancy captive. No modern writer has retold it better ; preserving for us its large primitive simplicity and fantastic charm, while imbuing it with that throb of humanity that Morris never failed to give to all these ancient mythologies. The voyage of the famous Argo, the wanderings and adventures of Jason, are told with a limpid straightforwardness that it would be hard to match outside of Homer—while the Poet's mellow sense of colour is used with effect in the descriptive passages.

There is the same imaginative sympathy with his subject, as in the earlier volume ; and to this is now added a technical mastery over his material, hitherto lacking.

Considering the length of the poem, it is remarkable how finely Morris sustains the interest. There is fluency without diffusiveness; sweetness without monotony; an archaic atmosphere without a shade of pedantry. There is also an utter lack of any striving after rhetoric; yet it is always strong and impressive. Always eschewing the facile sentimentalism of the popular versifier, he never fails to grip the reader with the pathos of the story.

One reason for the success of the poem lies in the ease with which he treats the old heroic couplet, that so readily, in inexperienced hands, becomes monotonous. He learned, no doubt, something from Keats here, though more uniformly successful than he in varying the metre with a division of the couplet over two sentences.

Occasionally he offends the ear with a dissyllabic use of such words as *mire* and *fire;* but even the most peddling criticism can find little to cavil at in this poem; while it is quite easy to miss its unforced beauties.

The first meeting of Medea with Jason, and her frank avowal of passion for him, are pictured with that little touch of tenderness and sense of the tragic brevity of life which

one always finds in Morris. She reminds him how much she is giving up for him, and how gladly she surrenders her present comfort and power :

> " Bethink thee of the men grown old in wars,
> Who do my bidding ; what delights I have,
> How many ladies lie in wait to save
> My life from toil and carefulness, and think
> How sweet a cup I have been used to drink,
> And how I cast it to the ground for thee.
> Upon the day thou weariest of me,
> I wish that thou mayst somewhat think of this,
> And 'twixt thy new-found kisses, and the bliss
> Of something sweeter than thine old delight,
> Remember thee a little of this night
> Of marvels, and this starlit, silent place,
> And these two lovers standing face to face."

The flight of the lovers, the midnight picture of the silent quay, broken only by the twittering of a small green bird, the setting forth again of the Argo and the desperate fight with those who opposed its way, all these things are told with even greater force and beauty.

The music of the verse rolls on, and, like the rhythmic plashing of the boat through those faery seas, steeped in strange magic, sometimes rising to a majestic swell of melody, at other times fading away into a delicate and

plaintive note as in the song of the water nymph :

"I know a little garden-close
Set thick with lily and red rose . . .
There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea ;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green."

Or in the more passionate moan of the exquisite *Song of the Hesperides :*

"Neither from us shall wisdom go
To fill the hungering hearts of men,
Lest to them threescore years and ten
Come but to seem a little day,
Once given, and taken soon away.
Nay, rather let them find their life
Bitter and sweet, fulfilled of strife,
Restless with hope, vain with regret,
Trembling with fear, most strangely set
Twixt memory and forgetfulness ; . . .
And surely when all this is past,
They shall not want their rest at last."

Thus the story wanders on with all the windings of the river, deepening and broadening as it approaches its end — the tragic catastrophe, the abandonment of the hapless Medea, and of her terrible vengeance on the woman who supplanted her in Jason's affection.

Jason was an overwhelming success. Originally it was intended to form one of the tales in *The Earthly Paradise,* but had outgrown its purpose.

Morris at this time wrote with extraordinary facility and fluency. He was always a rapid writer and his abundant vitality and zest in creation provided the necessary stimulus.

Tennyson's opinion of the book was high, as may be judged from the following letter :

" DEAR MR. MORRIS,

" Many thanks for your new book and for your kind regards. If I like the *Paradise* as well as I did the *Jason* I shall find it a rich gift.

" Yours truly,

" A. TENNYSON."

Jason is on a big, *The Earthly Paradise* on a colossal scale. Morris here sweeps the earth of some two dozen of its finest tales. They are tales differing widely in racial flavour and subject matter ; sombre legends from the North, graceful fancies from Greece, quaint fantasies of Teutonic stock, gay and stirring romances of French parentage ; but one and all passed through the alembic of his mediæval imagination, emerging with the unmistakable

mark of Morris upon them. The beauty of the physical world, the mutability of things, the impending shadow of death, the desire of man for woman, these are the familiar notes we recognise, and over all, like a summer haze, the dreaming melancholy of the poet's mood.

What poet but Morris ever dealt more frankly and lovingly on human passion with so cool and temperate a touch? Who more finely illustrates the subtle but very real difference between sensuousness and sensuality? Some of the tales deal necessarily with hardships and sorrows, but there again the art of the poet softens the picture. The voices lose the note of poignancy in that enchanted atmosphere; the very griefs are like shadows that dim faintly for a moment the blue of the sky, and then are lost to view. It is all a fairy tale. Morris had set out to distract us from the bewildering care of the day, and he sees to it that his stories have no harsh outline or note of discordance. He is sick at heart with the world, and is trying to forget the insistent ugliness that lies about him.

In the prologue, we hear how certain mediæval adventurers took ship from the plague-stricken land, and sailed across the seas in search of an Earthly Paradise where the

secret of Eternal Youth might have been discovered.

They find in place of this a nameless city on a distant shore, inhabited by Greeks, and preserving the fine traditions of early Greece. These voyagers, Northern in temperament and knowing well the Northern mythologies, interchange stories with the elders of the city, and story follows story with the charm and regularity of *The Thousand and One Nights*, or *The Canterbury Tales*.

It is indeed an ancient device—this telling of tales within tales, but a device that never loses its magic in expert hands.

Chaucer's inspiration is graciously acknowledged in the prologue, where also we have something of the author's own standpoint towards life. For the rest, the narrator never intrudes himself upon the scene that flows from his pen with a lucid simplicity and fine directness beyond all criticism.

There are twenty-four stories in all. Twelve are Greek in their origin ; the other twelve are derived from mediæval sources. All are treated in mediæval rather than Greek fashion, and nearly all have little turns of fancy and inventive incidents due to the writer's own imagination.

A cursory look at these reveals the plenitude of material: French romances of the twelfth century, like *Ogier the Dane;* Greek legends such as *Cupid and Psyche;* a German tale of the fourteenth century, the *Hill of Venus;* and Norse myths such as the *Lovers of Gudrun.* The material is diverse, delicate Teutonic fantasy, the crude passion of the North, the gay sentiment and chivalry of Charlemagne, the primitive simplicity of the Greek. Yet one and all are woven into the same coloured screen by Morris—a cloth of divers colours. He is the mediæval romancer always and frankly. "Troy," as Mr. Mackail says, "is to his imagination, a town exactly like Bruges, spired and gabled, red-roofed, filled with towers and swinging bells. The Trojan princes go out like the knights in Froissart, and tilt at the barriers." Morris could be accurate enough when he liked. But he often deliberately ignored historical exactitude in favour of romantic beauty. He set out to please the eye with his procession of lovely, panoramic pictures; and the centuries are for him merely pigments of fine colouring, which he uses as he will.

In the same way we are bidden in the prologue to come to a London "small, and

white, and clean." Small, mediæval London certainly was, but in those days of pestilence and primitive sanitation, of gutterless, cobbled streets and crazy wooden houses, to call it "white and clean" needs a very ample poetic licence.

The poem is one of extraordinary length, over forty-two thousand lines in all; and perhaps the best tribute we can pay to it is to say that it never seems too long. For its immense discursiveness is in reality a part of its charm. The reader who wearies of its length has missed the peculiar merit of the book, and the special significance of Morris's work. One might as well complain of the lushness of meadow-grass, or wish a leisurely meandering stream to be a cataract.

Yet the pensive and melancholy atmosphere that permeates the poem, is never oppressive. It is less definite and obtrusive than in the Lotus Land pictured by Tennyson. There is in it no bitterness, no despair: the sunset colours never fade into grey twilight as they do in Matthew Arnold's verse. The persistent romanticism and sheen of pictorial beauty are sufficient compensations for the wistful undernote. The wanderers fail to reach the mythical land of the Ever-Young; the heroes in the

tales start on quests that never find fruition; the lives of one and all are marked by constant struggle and aspiration, thwarted continually by the gods who rule otherwise. But purposely and designedly Morris refrains from giving to his tales that sense of reality that would make them as profoundly pitiful and sombre as the world drawn for us by Thomas Hardy. Morris has no wish to harrow us with the ironies and tragedies that abound in life. The wistful note he cannot withhold, but after all it is as a romancer and idealist that he writes, with the object of distracting us from the preoccupations of actual life.

There is plenty of adventure, and abundant hardships in his poem, but for all the brave show of storm and stress, sorrow and tragedy never enter. They are driven without the gates of his faery world.

His villains may scowl and shout; but examine them carefully, and their villainy will be found to be merely a question of trappings. The essential kindliness and warm humanity of Morris are for ever drawing their humours from them. Misfortune and trouble he paints, for as an artist he must needs have light and shade in his pictures, but he takes care to whisper that we are not to have any heartaches

over them. Nor indeed do we. For all the semblance of conflict and world-happenings, a sense of still life pervades the whole work.

"There was little wind," he adds after one of his exquisite descriptive vignettes. There is significance in the comment. "Little wind!" Never enough, certainly, to blow away the delicate haze that softens all the outlines of his fantastic world. Nor did he wish it otherwise!

One story alone in this feast of colour stands out as of more sombre and starker texture than the rest, *The Lovers of Gudrun.* It is worth noting, for he touches for the first time upon those sagas of the North that dominate the third period of his verse-writing. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who had no great liking for Morris's poetry, admired this poem particularly.[1]

Gudrun herself is a Scandinavian Cleopatra, with all the fascination and magnetism of the courtesan, yet with an element of grimness and savagery added.

It is a terrible story of passion: the passion of two foster brothers—Kiartan and Bodli—for Gudrun and the mischief wrought thereby; for between the brothers had existed a David

[1] According to Mr. W. M. Rossetti.

and Jonathan affection which not even the fierceness of their ardour for Gudrun wholly quenches. The crowning tragedy of this lurid poem lies in the despairing cry of Gudrun :

" I did the worst to him I loved the most ! "

But she is far less real, less vital a figure than the woman drawn by Shakespeare. The narrative method of Morris diffuses rather than concentrates interest. It is other with the dramatist ; there the background exists for the characters, here the characters are little more than silhouettes on the background.

The story would be too fierce and terrible were it not told by Morris. But his romantic aloofness draws out the heat and fury from the story, leaving only its tragic beauty.

The artistic presentment chosen by Morris has its drawbacks, but these are most clearly felt in some of the prose romances where a more vivid actuality, a more intimate and idiosyncratic manner, would have given a greater compelling interest and a wider appeal to the beautiful tales.

In his longer poems these limitations matter far less ; and the decorative touch, the deliberate ignoring of perspective, has a special magic of its own. I say longer poems, advisedly,

for in such work as *The Defence of Guenevere* and *The Haystack in the Floods* he touches a poignant note, a depth of feeling, such as one rarely comes across in *Jason* or *The Earthly Paradise.*

After the completion of *The Earthly Paradise,* Morris paid his first visit to Iceland, and while his imagination was being taken captive by the stern grandeur of the North, his morality play, *Love is Enough* (1871), was published. This poem, wrought round a story taken from the *Mabinogion,* has been highly praised by critics : and its cleverness of technique deserves, no doubt, the praise passed upon it. None the less, I cannot feel that this poem ranks as one of his characteristic successes.

The general scheme of Morris's play is promising enough.

The morality, that curious connecting-link between the old miracle play and the romantic drama ushered in by Marlowe, is by no means unsuited for expressing modern ideas in a simple framework of allegorical abstraction.

In place of the familiar messenger of the old morality, we have the figure of Love. Love and the Music expound the action of the play to the Emperor and Empress, who are witnessing it just as Theseus and Hippolyta witnessed

Pyramus and Thisbe, though in a more sympathetic spirit; then the peasants, who are also spectators, put the comments of Love and the Music into their own rougher language. But the general action is over-involved, and Morris's essentially undramatic methods impart a vagueness and lack of grip to a good deal of the narrative. The lyrics interspersed are sweet and musical, but oddly out of place, and their presence only makes one wonder the more why Morris should have deliberately shackled himself with the fifteenth-century dramatic form, while making merely a half-hearted attempt to follow its ground plan.

Nor as a lyrical drama will it compare with the work of Shelley, save to the disadvantage of Morris. Put beside the fire and spontaneity and passion of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, or *Hellas*, Morris's deliberate art seems artificial and constrained.

VII

THE LATER WORK (1877–1895)

THE translation of the *Æneids* of Virgil, in 1875, a pleasant and attractive piece of work, is less what it purports to be, Virgil in English dress, than a mediæval rendering of Virgilian stories. But Virgil is not seen to the best advantage in mediæval dress; or in easy-flowing lines. One needs the finely-chiselled Tennysonian phrase.

Yet if there were any who fancied that Morris's poetic energies were flagging they soon found out their mistake.

For in 1876, *Sigurd the Volsung* was published, than which Morris never did anything finer.

That curious entity, the reading public, took *Jason* to their hearts, but regarded *Sigurd* with chill disfavour. They were fully sensible to the romantic charm of *The Earthly Paradise*, but the tragic grandeur of this anglicised Saga did not move them. Why was this?

In the first place, no doubt, the somewhat cumbrous shaping of the poem militated against it. The roughness of Browning with the complexities of Meredith proved serious obstacles to their recognition, for the average reader of poetry dislikes trouble.

The pellucid verse of Tennyson had spoiled him. Verbal felicities and obvious moralising were what appealed most strongly. He had no use for the "barbaric yawp" of Whitman or the intellectual gymnastics of Meredith, and the old Saga was, as a lady once observed, "not quite nice."

The lady was right. It *is* "not quite nice." Nor did it aspire to be. There are no drawing-room sentimentalities here; it is not even dressed up to suit the fastidious civilised palate. *Sigurd* is not a romance; it is not a pretty story; it is a piece of pristine savagery roughly hewn from many Sagas; and no doubt the savagery and grimness of the story, no less than its method of telling, has been against it in public appreciation.

Yet below all the cruelty and brutality of the men and women who move through the story, there are qualities of endurance, faithfulness, tragic depths of affection that make of the poem a fine, salutary tonic for our Age.

Certainly it marks an era in Morris's development as a poet.

The death of Arthur Hallam changed the course of Tennyson's muse: sweeping away the languor of his earlier work, and introducing into it a new note of passion and fire and a sensibility to the life of his time which are not to be found in his Claribels and Eleanors.

There is no personal element in Morris's case; only an increasing appreciation of the blighting and deadening effect of modern commercialism, and the feeling that in these Northerners there was a vibrant humanity, well worthy of attention, admiration, and even respect.

An "idle singer" he had never been, despite his epithet, but it might be charged against some of his earlier work a too smooth and facile gift of song. Now he has emerged from the lowlands of song, and, like Ibsen's Brand, he stands upon the heights summoning his countrymen to witness what free, unfettered lives might achieve, and like Brand, he seemed to declare:

> "What you will lose? Your Gods abhorred
> Your feasts to Mammon and the Lord,
> The glittering bonds ye did not loathe—
> And all the pillows of your sloth!
> What you will gain? A will that's whole,—
> A soaring faith, a single soul—

The willingness to lose, that gave
Itself rejoicing to the grave.
A crown of Thorns on every brow—
That is the wage you're earning now." [1]

Some such lesson as this Morris found in the old sagas, and from them he derived an inspiration that he could not find in the life around him.

Had he written *Sigurd* frankly as an allegory, or sentimentalised it as Tennyson did the *Idylls*, he would no doubt have been listened to more readily. But he left the allegory—and rightly so, to our imagination—and seemed to say : here is a picture, terrible and grim enough in all conscience, but full of suggestions for those that read it aright.

The real significance of *Sigurd* was lost, although in it we have the rich fighting qualities of Morris, and the splendid idealism of the man projected into his poetry for the first time.

The spiritual significance of this epic is the first outstanding quality to be noted. The second thing to observe is, the change of key. Sweetness, dreamy charm, flowing cadences ; these qualities we have seen in Morris's poems

[1] Translated by C. H. Herford (Heinemann).

in abundance. But they would have seemed of little avail in *Sigurd*.

What then is required in a poem of this kind ?

A splendid free rhythm, unshackled by strict metrical conventions that should retain its grandeur and dignity ; freedom without chaos.

To a large extent, this is precisely what we do find. Take the superb close of the poem : the *Death of Gudrun :*

" She stood on the edge of the steep, and no child of man was there :
A light wind blew from the sea-flood and its waves were little and fair,
And gave back no sign of the burning, as in twinkling haste they ran,
White-topped in the merry morning, to the walls and the havens of man.

" Then Gudrun girded her raiment, on the edge of the steep she stood,
She looked o'er the shoreless water, and cried out o'er the measureless flood :
' O Sea, I stand before thee ; and I who was Sigurd's wife !
By his brightness unforgotten I bid thee deliver my life
From the deeds and the longing of days, and the lack I have won of the earth,
And the wrong amended by wrong, and the bitter wrong of my birth ! '
" She hath spread out her arms as she spake it, and away from the earth she leapt,

And cut off her tide of returning; for the sea-waves over her swept,
And their will is her will henceforward; and who knoweth the deeps of the sea,
And the wealth of the bed of Gudrun, and the days that yet shall be? "

Again, take the mighty pledge of Sigurd at his bridal:

" By the earth that groweth and giveth, and by all the Earth's increase
That is spent for Gods and man-folk; by the sun that shines on these;
By the Salt-Sea-Flood that beareth the life and death of men;
By the Heavens and Stars that change not, though earth die out again;
By the wild things of the mountain, and the houseless waste and lone;
By the prey of the Goths in the thicket and the holy Beast of Sôn,
I hallow me to Odin for a leader of his host,
To do the deeds of the Highest, and never count the cost:
And I swear, that whatso great-one shall show the day and the deed,
I shall ask not why nor wherefore, but the sword's desire shall speed:
And I swear to seek no quarrel, nor to swerve aside for aught,
Though the right and the left be blooming, and the straight way wend to nought:
And I swear to abide and hearken the prayer of any thrall,

Though the war-torch be on the threshold and the foe-men's feet in the hall :
And I swear to sit on my throne in the guise of the kings of the earth,
Though the anguish past amending, and the unheard woe have birth :
And I swear to wend in my sorrow that none shall curse mine eyes
For the scowl that quelleth beseeching, and the hate that scorneth the wise.
"So help me Earth and Heavens, and the Under-sky and Seas,
And the Stars in their ordered houses, and the Norns that order these !

"And he drank of the Cup of the Promise, and fair as a star he shone,
And all men rejoiced and wondered, and deemed Earth's glory won."

Read in snatches, the poem is singularly impressive and beautiful. But the English hexameter which Morris has adopted is an especially trying one for so long a poem, unless some variations of rhythm are made. It may be admitted that he evokes some splendid music from the old fourteener. But there is a certain monotony about the rise and fall of the line that somewhat militates against its grip on the reader.

Extraordinarily clever, your interest in the poem is transferred after a while to the dexterity

of the metrist. You watch him as you watch an expert juggler, marvelling at his dexterity and wondering how he can keep it up so long. It is a compliment to the prosodist rather than to the literary artist.

Yet the poem is a fine and impressive one. There is little of the idle singer here. The song has a ring of passion alien to the earlier work ; and an underlying significance that suggests qualities in the poet, of which hitherto there had been little trace.

After *Sigurd*, come the *Chants for Socialists* (1885)—the first fruits of his Socialistic Propaganda. From the poetical point of view these chants are not important. It is the light they throw on the development of Morris's mind and sympathies that interests us most in them. They are spirited, but lack that simplicity and intensity that work of this kind needs. Indeed, Morris was to do far more service for Socialism as an artist in prose than in verse. His very artistic excellences stood in his way. Superior to Charles Kingsley as a literary artist, his propagandist verse lacks the stark intensity of Kingsley's, and the moving simplicity of Ebenezer Elliott's.

The translated *Odyssey* is characteristic of Morris. His genius is nearer akin to Homer

than to Virgil. If the rare dignity of the Homeric line were beyond him, it has proved equally beyond every other translator. The vigour is here and a great deal of the elemental beauty. Certainly it is one of the happiest renderings of the Greek Saga. Among the earliest to recognise this was Oscar Wilde, who reviewed it in the *Westminster Gazette.*

The period of verse-writing was drawing to a close. It had been a rich and prolific one, but there were other worlds to conquer, and Morris was soon to show that his poetic impulse could find as noble a medium in prose as in verse.

In some of the earlier Romances, *The Roots of the Mountains* and *The House of the Wolfings,* there are snatches of song, musical and mellow as of yore. Yet generally speaking it may be said that, with *Sigurd,* Morris's career as a poet closed.

There are two important characteristics that individualise Morris's poetic work, and differentiate it from that of his contemporaries. In the first place, spaciousness of design. The most obvious thing about his work as an artist, whether the work be a wall-paper or an epic, is this spaciousness of design. Large effects, ample spaces of beauty, diffusion rather than concentration, were what he aimed at.

His sympathies as a man were extensive rather than intensive; comprehensive, not particular. Likewise as an Artist this broad comprehensiveness is a dominant feature. He had no eclectic preferences where beauty was concerned, and his hearty appreciation of differing types of artistic work, is well known. A tiny blade of grass and a magnificent damask rose were equally loved and admired by him: in this respect, the passion for every varying form of beauty in the earth, he was in accord with Wordsworth and Ruskin.

> "The meanest flower that blows can bring
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Thus he was as fully a democrat in Art as in every-day life. He saw beauty everywhere—and it was this quality of beauty that he wished to diffuse over every phase of life and every form of human activity.

Both *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* are remarkable for broad strands of colour, free, large outlines of construction, and that rich elaboration of detail, which aims at a general rather than a particular effect. It is this quality of workmanship that makes quotation from Morris unsatisfactory. To detach a few lines from its context is like snatching away

an apple blossom as evidence of the beauty of an orchard. With many poets, on the other hand, it is possible to do this. The poetry of Tennyson is a chaplet of precious stones : you may break away a stone, which is a polished work of art in itself. But with Morris, the effect lies not in the parts, but in the whole ; the part wrenched away withers and dies.

Morris cannot, or at any rate will not, condense ; and therefore takes a dozen stanzas to convey his atmosphere.

This has its advantages as well as its drawbacks, but it certainly militates against snatches of quotation.

It is a rare and precious gift to be able, like Keats, to breathe into a phrase the inmost spirit of Romance :

> " Magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

But it is quite as rare if not as precious to be able, as Morris could, to write book after book of verse, and wrap the reader round continually with this atmosphere of romance.

The method of Morris was to achieve artistic excellence not in " short swallow-flights of song " ; not by some marvellous juggling with words ; not by some miracle of perspective,

but by imparting to every detail of his picture an equal care, by creating Beauty not in some dazzling streak of light, but as a luminous atmosphere which should penetrate all portions of his work. How entirely gracious are the lovely little nature sketches that embroider *The Earthly Paradise*, touched often with warm personal feeling. For instance :

> " Fair was the morn to-day, the blossom's scent
> Floated across the fresh grass, and the bees
> With low vexed song from rose to lily went ; . . .
> And thine eyes shone with joyous memories ;
> Fair was the early morn, and fair wert thou,
> And I was happy—ah, be happy now ! "

This pleasant spaciousness of beauty has no equal in modern poetry. A more polished artistry we find in Tennyson ; a greater intellectual grip in Browning ; a more haunting magic in Rossetti ; but for easy mastery over his material and general diffusion of beauty Morris has no superior.

The second characteristic is directness of method.

Directness is not essential to beauty of literary workmanship. There is a beauty in the allusiveness and complexity of poets like Browning and Rossetti, and especially of Meredith. But the directness that springs from a

large simplicity of nature was instructive and essential to a temperament such as Morris's. Without it his spaciousness of design might have spelt mere prolixity and incoherence. With it, it gives lucidity and unity to his work. It is part of the old-world atmosphere he brought into modern literature, and shows how fully he had incorporated into blood and marrow the old legends and sagas.

This directness is largely the outcome of his kinship with the rough vigour of the North. It leads him sometimes into over-fluency, never into ineptitude.

In his poem, *Love is Enough*, he speaks plainly and unmistakably of the relationship existing between his life as a dreamer and as a worker :

" That if, the while ye toiled and sorrowed most,
The sound of your lamenting seemed all lost,
And from my land no answer came again,
It was because of that your care and pain
A house was building, and your bitter sighs
Came hither as toil-helping melodies,
And in the mortar of our gem-built wall
Your tears were mingled 'mid the rise and fall
Of golden trowels tinkling in the hands
Of builders gathered wide from all the lands.—
Is the house finished? Nay, come help to build."

The common criticism of Morris's poetry—that there are no mountain peaks in it—is true

enough, but, like all negative criticism, misses the peculiar beauty of his work. He flies low, purposely, designedly ; and while there may be lacking that thrill and exhilaration in his utterance, which we find in the supreme flights of a Wordsworth, a Shelley, a Keats, there is a clarity, an ease, a level excellence, which his great predecessors often miss. He is preserved at any rate from the perils attending lofty flights.

In keeping close to the Earth, Morris has many compensations, none more grateful than the equable sweetness and uniform temperature of his work as a whole.

PART III

THE CRAFTSMAN

VIII

TO some, Art is a relaxation ; to others a business ; to a few it is a religion. It was all three to Morris. It was emphatically the most serious thing in the world, and the only thing, perhaps, worthy of his undivided allegiance. Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt wrote of him :

"At this fair oak table sat
Whilom he our Laureate,
Poet, handicraftsman, sage,
Light of our Victorian age ;
William Morris, whose art's plan
Laid its lines in ample span,
Wrought it, trestle, board and rib,
With good help of Philip Webb
For an altar of carouse
In his own home, the Red House.

"Thirty years and five here he
Made good cheer and company,
Feasting all with more than bread
Had men stored the things he said :
Jest profound and foolings wise,
Truth unliveried of lies,
Basenesses chastised and set
Like hounds slain beneath his feet ;

Knowledge prodigally poured
His best wine at this free board.
Nay, if but the crumbs he shed,
Nightly round, of heart and head,
Gleaned had we, not this good hall
Half the wonders might install
With wealth lost, which now must sleep,
Dumb, when we have ceased to weep."

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.[1]

Considerable as were his friendships, it may be doubted whether any human being ever gripped his heart and imagination in the same way as did craftsmanship. Where some men make fresh and interesting acquaintances, Morris discovered new handicrafts. Where some men are fascinated by the psychological complexities of their fellow-men, Morris was arrested by a striking pattern. He was neither a cold nor an unsociable man; he had nothing of the austere self-detachment which the poet-naturalist Thoreau showed at times. Sincere, strong, simple natures, as we have seen, appealed to him directly. But human nature in the concrete never profoundly interested him; and even his few intimate friendships lacked the

[1] These lines, now published for the first time by the courtesy of the author, were written on a dining-table designed by Philip Webb, in 1859, for the Red House, Upton, and used by William Morris continually there, at Queen Square, and at Kelmscott House. It was given by Mrs. Morris to Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, after Morris's death, as a memento of his friendship for Mr. Blunt. There is an inscription to this effect on the table.

intensity that characterises the affection of some men.

To put it plainly, he could get on much better without people than without a craft. He had the self-sufficiency of the artist, without the absorbing egotism. The distinction is somewhat subtle, but none the less clear and unmistakable ; until it be grasped, one loses the clue to Morris's character.

Few men can have been less self-centred than he. If he were uninterested in other people's temperaments, he was equally uninterested in his own. There was no *Narcissus* touch in his nature. He never posed, never wondered what others might think or say of him. He knew what he could do, and had no diffidence in the matter. But there was no trace of megalomania. He had nothing of the thirsty vanity of so many artistic men (literary or otherwise), that mops up greedily any adulation poured before it. If he liked a man he met him on equal terms. There was no getting into his favour by sycophancy. You stood a better chance by abusing him. No man was less inclined to brood over the hostile attitude of others towards himself. When he thought it was genuine and sincere he would try to understand the reason. But when it was a matter of

whim or caprice, he passed it by; not because of any feeling of superiority, but because likes and dislikes were a matter to him of unimportance.

At the same time, his artistic interests were sufficiently engrossing to make him independent of others. And many of his friendships were rather in the nature of accompaniments—albeit pleasant ones—to his artistic activities, than the first call upon his affections.

"Morris's work," wrote Mr. Stopford Brooke to the present writer, "was at all points in life more to him than anything else in the world. He lived in it as on an upper plane, and all that interfered with it was on another plane, lower than it, and demands not connected with it made him impatient."

This is certainly borne out by many of his intimate letters. He gloried in his craftsmanship and once alluded to himself as "a master artisan, if I may claim that dignity."

One effect of this may be seen in his correspondence, which is interesting in so far as it deals with things and ideas, but rarely interesting for those personal touches and temperamental intimacies that give such charm to the correspondence of many artistic men.

"All my friends," he wrote on one occasion to Sir Philip Burne-Jones (then a little boy at

school), "will tell you if you ask them—what a bad hand I am at letter-writing: even *to your Papa my letters have generally been of the briefest and woodenest.*" There is some truth in this, though there were happy exceptions.

The letter from which I am quoting is certainly not wooden. Written to the little son of his dearest friend, it is naturally a frank and friendly letter; nor is it without amusingly characteristic touches. Yet every now and then he seems to forget he is writing to a child.

"Alas, I did not fight enough in my time, from want of hope let us say, not want of courage, or else I should have been more respected in my earlier days: in the few fights I had I was rather successful, for a little, and thin (yes) boy as I was: for the rest I had a hardish time of it, as chaps who have brains and feelings generally do at school, or say in all the world even, *whose griefs are not much shared in by the hard and stupid; nor its joys either, happily, so that we may be well content to be alive and eager, and to bear pain sometimes rather than to grow like rotting cabbages and not to mind it.*[1]

"A hint to you on the mechanical part of

[1] The italics are mine.

battle : I was watching two little boys fighting in the street, and it refreshed my memory of what used to go on at school : for each seemed afraid of the other and held his head down and hit round ; and certainly the one who had stood up straight and hit out well from the shoulder would have got the best of it ; and you may take it as a certain rule, both in fisticuffs and all manner of fighting, that if you are not afraid of being hit you can hit your enemy, and then the rest is a matter of endurance only."

This fighting quality is one of the factors of Morris's success as a craftsman. He loved overcoming difficulties ; the harder a craft was the more did he delight in it. This is not to say, of course, that his artistic genius was merely the art of taking infinite pains. There is no more ridiculous definition of genius than that. The great craftsman, like the great poet, is born, not made. Where the great poet thinks and feels naturally in rhythm, so did Morris think and feel in arabesques and curves. They came instinctively to him ; he could no more have explained them than he could have explained why he continued to breathe. Even when talking on other matters, his hands would be unconsciously mapping out some fine

design, just as a musician may improvise, while his conscious attention is turned to other matters.

Given this intuitive faculty to start with, patience and perseverance were superadded, of singular tenacity. What wonder, then, that he achieved so much? His prodigious vitality helped him. Most craftsmen experience fluctuations of vitality, when their handiwork suffers. Such never seemed to befall Morris. Until the last few years of his life, his freshness and tirelessness were the wonder of his friends and acquaintances. He did not seem to know what it was to be in bad or indifferent form. His form was constant quantity.

Upon the opinion being expressed by Mr. Thackeray Turner that "designing was one of the most exciting occupations, except when you came across a nut which you could not crack," Morris replied, "I don't see it at all. If you can do it you can, and if you can't, you can't."

Sufficient has been said in earlier chapters to indicate Morris's attitude towards modern life. As a citizen he growled at it; as a poet he fled from it; as a craftsman he tried to mediævalise it. The street of Victorian London was to him "the architecture of the brick box with the slate lid"; while the domestic interiors were

for him either costly and hideous, or cheap and hideous—but hideous always.

Remarkable as were the various phases of Morris's activities in craftsmanship, they interest us most by the fact that craftsmanship for him was, at bottom, a branch of sociology.

Briefly stated, his theory of Art was, that Beauty is intended for social service. Make, he said in effect, your furniture and decorations sound and well-proportioned, and you will have no sneaking affection for mere fripperies and tawdry excrescences.

The first important artistic influence in his life was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; the little brotherhood which he founded some ten years later owed, probably, its primary inspiration to this.

Regarded in its narrower aspects, the Pre-Raphaelite movement was merely an Art tendency that tried to restore to modern painting something of that individuality and sincerity which characterised the painters before Raphael, e.g. Giotto, Bellini, and Fra Angelico. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, therefore, was an active protest against the mechanical and superficial art of the day. But in its larger aspects Pre-Raphaelitism was much more than this; it was a plea for the imaginative life, a

protest against the intellectualism that had crept into the poetry of the day, and had threatened its beauty and emotional vitality.

In the fondness of its adherents for mediæval art, where beauty and worship are almost convertible terms, one can realise how closely related this modern Art revival was to the Tractarian movement. That movement also emphasised the imaginative as opposed to the intellectual life, and was as impatient with the scientific thought of the day as the Pre-Raphaelites themselves. Only, whereas the Tractarian said: "Science has nothing to do with Religion—it is mischievous," the Pre-Raphaelite said: "Science has nothing to do with Art—it is irrelevant." To Newman and Keble, the Scientific *time spirit* was a moral curse; to Rossetti and Morris it was merely a nuisance. In its inception, however, the devotional spirit and the sensibility of the artist were blended so effectively, that for a time Morris mistook his Art enthusiasm for a call to Ecclesiastical life. He was a devout High Churchman for a period, and read eagerly the Tractarian literature of the day. But though he relinquished all idea of taking Orders, no slight measure of the moral qualities of the religious idealist, as we have seen, always clung about him.

Properly considered, there is nothing in the least strange about this. The man of talent may be a cynic, but a genius is always religious deep down in the quality of his genius. Morris's genius is seen on rare occasion in his verse, less rarely in his prose, most frequently of all in his craftsmanship. For in his craftsmanship the humility and worshipfulness of genius is clearly discerned. The merely clever man is never humble : he is cocksure, with an underlying fearfulness that someone cleverer than he may come along to prove him wrong. The man of genius is humble yet calmly confident, for while he knows that what he does by virtue of his genius is good, yet he is smitten into humility by the very grandeur of his vision. For him the " wild surmise—silent, upon a peak in Darien."

The new Catholic movement had strongly appealed to Morris's artistic feeling, with its ritual, its æsthetic beauty, and its mediæval atmosphere. When he realised that the appeal was circumscribed, when the bluff, direct side of Morris's nature found no intellectual or moral satisfaction in the theology of the Churches, he dropped his Anglicanism quietly and unobtrusively. His attitude for the future was, theologically, one of indifference. He was

as frankly uninterested in religious philosophy as was Rossetti in politics. Nor could he be got to discuss these matters. It was outside his range of interest. But the religious side of Mediæval Art always appealed to him; and towards it he preserved, throughout his life, an intense seriousness and whole-heartedness that surprised acquaintances who had only seen the lighter and more buoyant aspects of his temperament.

A loyal and warm-hearted friend was Morris always, yet devotion and affection for Art came first and foremost. He was—by turns—a poet, a painter, a prose romancer, a designer, a student of economics, a printer, a street orator; but through these varying manifestations of his activity he remained all along a Craftsman. On some subjects he changed his mind, shifted his point of view; but, from start to finish, he was an Artist. It was in pursuance of this allegiance that he took on himself, in his later years, long, irksome tasks that wore down his physical frame.

During a summer holiday in France, in his Oxford days, Morris definitely relinquished all idea of taking Orders; and he then planned out for himself the career of an Architect.

Although, in the early flush of his friendship

with Rossetti, he had turned towards painting, his enthusiasm for architecture was not a whit abated. A lover of this " key to all the Arts " he was, throughout his life, and all the other forms of decorative art he regarded as contributing to the Mistress Art.

His period as a painter was brief. He was dissatisfied with his work in this direction. Some have attributed this to lack of cunning on Morris's part. It is quite true that he was unskilful at heads, probably because they interested him so little. But it was less lack of cunning, I think, than lack of interest, that made him give up the palette. He was not merely indifferent about faces, but about landscapes also. Eliminate these and there is little pictorial art left, of any value, which is not better expressed in the form of general mural decoration. It is not surprising, then, that he used his faculty for colour and sense of form elsewhere than in Painting.

A significant tribute to the influence on public life of Morris as a craftsman, was paid by Mr. John Burns in the course of a chat with the present writer.

After commenting on the sailor-like appearance of Morris, which struck so many people, Mr. Burns said in his direct, vivid way:

"William Morris was a chunk of humanity in the rough; he was a piece of good, strong, unvarnished oak—nothing of the elm about him. There is no side of modern social life that he has not touched for good. I am sure he would have endorsed absolutely the House and Town Planning Act, for which I am responsible. Much that is beautiful in modern architecture, or modern decoration; what is artistic in domestic comfort and taste, is due to him. But for him there would have been no Garden Cities on present lines; and if the firm of *Liberty* pay a good dividend to-day, as we hope they do, they owe it to him; he created the public taste for their fabrics. He simplified and dignified domestic environment and provided many inartistic people with artistic homes. I speak as a fellow-craftsman associated with him intimately between 1882 and 1896. As one of the original members of the London County Council from 1889 to 1896, I have no hesitation in saying that much that was progressive in our work for London was due to Morris's inspiration. I asked him to design the Seal of the first London County Council, but he handed that piece of work on to Mr. Walter Crane, who did it well."

In its beginning, Morris's Art activities were

entirely in an ecclesiastical direction. In the mid-years of the century the most vital power in the Church of England had been the Broad Church movement, more especially in the vigorous and earnest hands of Frederick Denison Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and Frederick William Robertson of Brighton. The ethical and social aspects of Christianity had been particularly emphasised by these men.

The spiritual personality of Maurice, the lucid charm of Robertson's utterances, the virile practicality of Kingsley, these had proved assets of striking value to the English Church. But during the 'sixties their influence had waned, to some extent; and the High Church party, having exhausted controversial dialectics, found a more potent weapon for their cause in the æsthetic crusade which was one phase of this "Return to Mediævalism." Ritualism succeeded Tractarianism, and as a popular movement it was infinitely more powerful. A finely wrought altar-cloth, a beautiful stained-glass window, proved more potent in their appeal than dry, if brilliant, dialectics on the merits of Apostolical Succession. To a little band of Oxford men lies the chief credit of beautifying our churches, Morris, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, steeped as they were in mediæval Art, were

peculiarly fitted by instinct and technical equipment for this work. To Morris, the work was a work of love; the theological theories for which it stood had ceased to interest him, and unlike his great friend Burne-Jones, Church Decoration signified for him merely the initial stage in a campaign for the beautifying of every side of life.

At the outset, the firm of *Morris and Company* meant, for Morris at any rate, an arrangement between a few artists to effect a special kind of work. Its scope and intent are best seen by a consideration of the circular issued by the workers.

"The growth of Decorative Art in this country," says the circular, "owing to the efforts of English Architects, has now reached a point at which it seems desirable that Artists of reputation should devote their time to it. Although, no doubt, particular instances of success may be cited, still it must be generally felt that attempts of this kind hitherto have been crude and fragmentary. Up to this time, the want of that artistic supervision, which can alone bring about harmony between the various parts of a successful work, has been increased by the necessarily excessive outlay, consequent on

taking one individual artist from his pictorial labours.

"The artists whose names appear, hope by association to do away with this difficulty. Having among their number men of varied qualifications, they will be able to undertake any species of decoration, mural or otherwise, from pictures, properly so called, down to the consideration of the smallest work susceptible of art beauty. It is anticipated that by such co-operation, the largest amount of what is essentially the artist's work, along with his constant supervision, will be secured at the smallest possible expense, while the work done must necessarily be of a much more complete order, than if any single artist were incidentally employed in the usual manner.

"These Artists having for many years been deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts of all times and countries, have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character. They have, therefore, now established themselves as a firm, for the production, by themselves and under their supervision, of :

"I. Mural Decoration, either in Pictures or in Pattern Work, or merely in

the arrangement of Colours, as applied to dwelling-houses, churches, or public buildings.

" II. Carving generally, as applied to Architecture.

" III. Stained Glass, especially with reference to its harmony with Mural Decoration.

" IV. Metal Work in all its branches, including Jewellery.

" V. Furniture, either depending for its beauty on its own design, on the application of materials hitherto overlooked, or on its conjunction with Figure and Pattern Painting. Under this head is included Embroidery of all kinds, Stamped Leather, and ornamental work in other such materials, besides every article necessary for domestic use.

" It is only requisite to state further, that work of all the above classes will be estimated for, and executed in a business-like manner ; and it is believed that good decoration, involving rather the luxury of taste than the luxury of costliness, will be found to be much less expensive than is generally supposed."

Having started with the beautifying of the churches, Morris next proceeded to beautify the

homes of England—a work at once more difficult and more necessary. The domestic interior of the time combined meretricious flashiness with dingy heaviness. Ponderous mahogany, uncompromising slabs of plate-glass, dull, heavy carpets, drab walls, met the eye pretty generally. By way of a set-off to this depressing atmosphere of massive dinginess, there were preposterous gilt ornaments; and—last word in Victorian horrors!—waxen imitations of fruit under glass cases. Morris set about to change all that. He drove the gilded atrocities into theatres and public-houses—happily they are now migrating from the theatres—left waxen imitations to Madame Tussaud, and banished the stiff ugliness of the furniture into the consulting-room of doctor and dentist, where for years to come they were to depress (the mammoth pile of comic papers notwithstanding) the vitality of sensitive patients. In place of all this he introduced graceful Eastern rugs, or neat Indian matting, and light and cheerful Axminster carpets, and metamorphosed the uncompromising rigidity of the window, and the glassy stiffness of our mantels.

The inception of all this took place in the personal wants of Morris and Burne-Jones, to provide for their own unfurnished rooms at

17, Red Lion Square. Dissatisfied with the commercial supply at hand, Morris resolved to make his own furniture. Having satisfied his own artistic feeling, he wished naturally to project his artistic ideals into other places. The commercial side of the case appealed to him very little; Rossetti, on the other hand, with his keen business instinct, saw from the start, money in the concern. Money there certainly was, though Morris put an enormous amount of work and ability into the business for which he neither had (nor desired to have) any substantial financial return.

In his wall-papers, the individuality of the man is as fully displayed as in his poetry. Complexity and subtlety he disliked and avoided. He would have no pattern that lacked simplicity in its root idea. The later patterns are more elaborate than the earlier ones, but all are marked by simplicity of design, and a boldness of pattern, rarely aggressive. He would say: "I hate *all* rhetoric, but I hate it worst in Art."

Diverse as were the methods of domestic decoration, Morris, having essayed them all, looked about for other decorative worlds to conquer. This time it was book illumination; and once again it was in the Middle Ages that he found his inspiration. Patience was required

here no less than skill, but the impatient Morris could always school himself when Art commanded. A splendid specimen of his work in this direction lies in the copy of FitzGerald's *Omar*, given to Lady Burne-Jones. It occupies twenty-three pages and took a year and a half to achieve!

But Morris was resolved to go yet deeper into the mysteries of craftsmanship. At the back of all forms of Decorative Art lay colour; and with modern methods of dyeing he was profoundly dissatisfied. It was the age of so-called aniline dyes—so called since, strictly speaking, the aniline dye is a dry distillation from indigo—and for many years past the dyes had been made from coal tar. This method was an injurious one for the workman, and the colours obtained were greatly inferior to the old indigo colours, being harder in tint, and more fugitive in duration. But they were readily secured, and this gave them their popularity. Morris abjured them, set up his own dye-house, and with the richer and more permanent colour he produced gave the distinctive glory to the famous Hammersmith carpets and Merton tapestries.

Plants grown in the gardens at Merton Abbey served him for his vegetable dyes. For a time he had used duller tints, in lieu of better,

and these, we are told, were looked upon as essentially Morrisian. As a matter of fact, he had used them only under protest in order to get away from Prussian blues, sickly yellows, and sage greens, which he disliked cordially.

There is an excellent though oft-quoted story that illustrates this point forcibly. A wealthy American once visited Morris and Co., and inspected some of their choicest carpets. He seemed dissatisfied, and finally remarked : " But I thought your colours were subdued ! " At this, Morris, whose temper had been getting up steam during the interview, flung open the door and shouted : " If you want dirt you can find that in the street ! " To the street the offended customer repaired, whether in quest of dirt or of repartee, one cannot say. He had not reckoned with the " onion strain " in Morris.

Contrary to general opinion, however, Sir William Blake Richmond maintains that Morris had only a moderate sense of colour, although he had a rich and sure sense of form. To put it in Sir William's own words : " Morris's first instinct was for form, his second for colour. He had a very strong feeling for harmony in colour, but none for discord which a born colourist will resolve into a concord. He was afraid of violet, and always dirtied his primary tints."

This referred especially to his decorative work. "He had a fine sense of colour in black-and-white work."

The opinion of so distinguished a painter is entitled to respect, but I have met no other artistic friend of Morris who endorses it. Both Mr. Thackeray Turner and Mr. Emery Walker have expressed their surprise at this dictum. Mr. Thackeray Turner says: "Morris was, in my opinion, a great colourist and a perfect master of blue. I have at times felt that his reds were inclined towards crushed strawberries, but then, his wonderful red window in the Cathedral at Birmingham is a sufficient proof that he was also a master of reds."

Mr. Emery Walker also instanced these windows at St. Philip's, and added that "they remained to show what his colour was." They would be sufficient, in Mr. Walker's opinion, "to prove that he was one of the greatest colourists ever known in England."

Indigo-dyeing was a work of great difficulty, but this gave it a special attraction in Morris's eyes. Sometimes when a friend called to see him a voice would come up from the depths below: "I'm dyeing—I'm dyeing!" When at last he emerged, he presented a strange appearance, with vivid streaks of blue in his hair, which he

was in no way concerned to remove. In fact, on one occasion, when Rossetti came to take him out to a party, he would have cheerfully set forth, blue hair and all, had not his companion strongly remonstrated.

He loved everything in connection with his work. One day at Merton, Mr. Thackeray Turner tells me that Morris was putting in a spotted ground to one of his fine cretonne designs when a fastidiously-dressed young man called. Morris went on working during the conversation, then during a pause the young man said: "Can't you get one of your assistants to do all that spotting?" and Morris at once replied: "Do you think I am such a fool, after having had all the grind of doing this design, to let some other fool have the fun of doing the spotting!"

Late in the 'seventies, his enthusiasm for architecture was once again illustrated by *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings*, which he was instrumental in bringing into being. Restorations he heartily abominated, and the Society was tersely and expressively referred to in ordinary conversations as *Anti-Scrape*.

Restoration was so often an euphemism for the ruthless destruction of some beautiful relic. An ancient building was to Morris, as to Ruskin,

the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of a bygone age. About it lingered a halo of gracious memories ; and to obliterate such was an act of impiety. Neither Morris nor Ruskin was alone in this feeling ; but it was reserved for Morris to take practical steps to voice the finer feelings of the community. Having done this, he found ample support, and the useful defensive work done by the Society is too well known to need more than passing tribute.

Architecture was the Master Art to Morris : the Sun with its constellations of the decorative arts around him. To preserve the record in stone of a nation's history was, therefore, in Morris's opinion, a responsibility which all, with any feeling for beauty, ought to undertake. Mr. Mackail gives a delightful account in his biography of the means by which the captious and difficult Carlyle was brought round to support the scheme.

Morris's last essay in craftsmanship was his experiment in the art of printing. Here, as elsewhere, he threw himself into his work with enthusiastic thoroughness. He tackled the paper problem, getting the finest results from linen rags untouched by chemicals. Then he experimented with varieties of type, scattering over the publications of the Kelmscott Press

some of his most beautiful decorative designs.[1]

Morris attacked eagerly every side of the work with that astounding energy and absorbing joy that he always bestowed on a fresh activity; and without taking too seriously his cheery disparagement of Poetry at this time as "all tommy-rot," there is little doubt that verse-making for him had lost much of its old savour. His chief literary medium at this period was Prose.

According to Mr. James Leatham, Morris's attention had been drawn to printing in the 'eighties, while he was editing *The Commonweal*. The books have been criticised by printers and others for the broad outer margins he often favoured. But as Mr. Leatham—speaking as a practical printer himself—says: "Morris knew as the *scriptores* knew, as the early printers knew, and as everybody with a genuine taste for books knows—or at any rate feels—that the true artistic unity is not the single printed page, but the two pages side by side in the open book."[2]

During later years, Morris made friends among Socialists who had little appreciation of the

[1] See Mr. S. C. Cockerell's little book on *The History of the Kelmscott Press* for detailed account.

[2] *William Morris: Master of Many Crafts*, by James Leatham (Twentieth Century Press).

Artist in Morris, and he would relate with gusto a story about a Socialist friend of his in the Temple, to whose rooms he went on one occasion. He found the walls papered with one of the beautiful Morris patterns ; and concluded that this might be a delicate compliment intended for his benefit. On asking who put it up, his friend innocently replied : " Oh, the Benchers, I expect—it's pretty rank, isn't it ? "

Save with his Socialist friends, Morris's talk was mostly on Art matters. It was natural this should be so in converse with his lifelong friend Sir Edward Burne-Jones. But with others it was much the same. He was the enthusiastic craftsman, to whom Life was full of pleasant possibilities in the direction of decorative patterns. " What a lot of fun," he said to his sister on one occasion, " we could get out of a pot of whitewash."

During his later years he talked about Socialism more frequently, and Mr. Robert Ross tells me that Oscar Wilde entered a mild protest on one occasion : " If I want to hear about Socialism I can go to Trafalgar Square, when I come to see you I want to hear about Art." Morris complied readily.

His literary tastes were, as we have seen, circumscribed, but when literature and decora-

tive art were united, as in the mediæval manuscripts, he was an inveterate bookman to the last. When quite a young man, his greatest delight was to light upon some old manuscript trophy, which he would bear home in triumph : " I gave twenty pounds for this," he confided to his sister on one occasion—then added like a guilty schoolboy : " but don't tell mother ! "

He could date an old manuscript at sight, with a precision that was amazing ; he seemed to arrive at the right conclusion by instinct, just as a lightning calculator can tot up half a dozen columns at a time. His judgment of old furniture and oriental rugs was equally remarkable. It was largely owing to him that the nation acquired the notable Ardebil carpet in the South Kensington Museum.

A friend calling upon him one evening, found him on his hands and knees in ecstatic contemplation of a Persian carpet recently purchased. The friend was invited also to go on his hands and knees, but though an admirer of its beauties, felt like an unbeliever in the presence of a devotee, so intense was the enthusiasm of Morris and so self-absorbed in the contemplation of its excellences.

He had an unrivalled instinct in assessing the aptitude of other craftsmen. On one

occasion he said of a man who had brought some decorative work to him: "That man hasn't an equal in Europe for drapery; but he's no good at faces."

His memory was phenomenally retentive. A thing once seen he never forgot. "On one occasion," Mr. Thackeray Turner says, "he had just returned from surveying an old church; Morris recalled everything about that church, the disposition and character of the ornament, and could tell exactly at what point in the church these were situated. Yet his only visit to this church had been made about twenty years previously."

On another occasion, his friend Mr. Philip Webb showed him a design. Morris made little comment and seemed to be engrossed in other matters. But a long time afterwards he referred to the design, only seen for a moment or so, and recalled every detail about it. The secret of this lay, no doubt, in the fact that Morris gave his undivided attention to the matter in hand, whether a poem, a point in political economy, or a design. He took it completely in; and although he had the faculty of putting everything away from him when he turned to fresh matters, he always retained a clear and trustworthy recollection of the thing noted.

He knew in a moment whether a colour was about to turn out satisfactory; and when going through his works at Merton Abbey, he pointed to one of the experimental patterns: "That colour is all right to-day; but it'll be wrong in a day or so." So he put it aside.

He considered that he had practically made the fortune of Mr. Quaritch, the bookseller, and would jestingly say: "I believe that man has taken out an insurance on me!"

Thus one by one the different forms of craftsmanship had been taken up. Mural decoration, pictures, carving, stained glass, metal-work, furniture, paper-hanging, chintzes, book illumination, dyeing, carpet-weaving, tapestries, printing. The carpet and tapestry-weaving were done for a while at Merton Abbey. Then, when the Morrises had moved into Kelmscott in 1880, looms were set up there.

Among the important decorative activities of Morris and Co., it may be mentioned, that much of the new decoration in St. James's Palace in the later years of the last century was undertaken by them; Lord Carlisle's house in Palace Green, and Stanmore Hall near Bushey, are further remarkable examples of their work.

And what was the sum total of all these activities ?

They were all part of a scheme of applied Art, worked out with the object of establishing a definite relationship with the general architecture of the house. All the decorative arts, in Morris's view, were to be subordinate to Architecture.

The ulterior end of this varied craftsmanship must always be borne in mind. It was to serve the community. A thing, however beautiful, if socially useless, had no place in Morris's scheme of things. A thing of beauty was a joy for ever only so far as it was a service also.

This view of Art he carried into every branch. It may explain to some extent why he was indifferent to many forms of music and had a special predilection for the folk-song.

Morris's conception of Art as the amplest expression of Life had, of course, been urged eloquently years before by Ruskin. Ever since his Oxford days, when Ruskin's famous chapter on Gothic in *Stones of Venice* had arrested his imagination, the influence of the great Art-critic had been a compelling one ; and his indebtedness he frankly acknowledged. Ruskin was always contending that the strength and beauty of a nation's art depended upon the strength

and beauty of its moral character. He co-related the character of the artist with the nature of his handiwork. It followed, therefore, that if the source of national life be tainted, it were useless to look for sane art.[1]

To which Morris would certainly have said, "Amen."

Ruskin went still farther when he contended that the great evil of Civilisation is not that men's bodies are starved, but that their minds and imaginations are, and, therefore, they look to wealth as the only means of pleasure; from which it followed that Art was in substance the expression of man's joy in his work. Thus it will be seen that not merely was there a basic sympathy between the two men, but that Morris had openly and frankly taken up Ruskin's most emphatic teaching.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer from this that Morris, as a social teacher, was merely an extension of Ruskin. Morris was not born to be an imitator or passive follower of any man, however great. A disciple he was, at one time to Rossetti, at another to Ruskin, at another to Chaucer. But a disciple always, with a vigorous creative imagination of his own.

[1] See *Lectures on Art.*

He was the best of all disciples, one who incorporates his master's teaching into himself, and re-creates it afresh with an added richness and vitality.

One point in which he differed from Ruskin is the greater emphasis he lays upon the quiescent moods of Life. Here we come upon the dreamer side of Morris again, the man who loved to contemplate beauty and relax his energies in its presence. And whilst he is at one with Ruskin in holding that Decoration should "give people pleasure in the things they must perforce make," he lays greater stress than his master does on giving them pleasure also in the things they must use. Not only must a man's work be happy, but his rest also should be fruitful. Thus Art satisfies both the dynamic mood of life which cries for action, and the static mood that demands contemplation. A more important difference from Ruskin lay in their respective attitudes towards Mediævalism.

But this introduces the Social Reformer, and opens up problems more suitably discussed in a later chapter.

PART IV

THE PROSE ROMANCER

IX

THE WHY AND WHEREFORE

"'Life is sweet, brother.'

'Do you think so?'

'Think so? There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things: there's likewise a wind on the heath.'"

"*Lavengro.*"

COLERIDGE'S remark that there is no antithesis between poetry and prose, only between poetry and science, is happily illustrated in Morris's prose romances. They are essentially poetical in treatment, and exemplify, as Mr. Watts-Dunton has acutely observed,[1] the distinction between real poetical prose and the rhetorical prose of such writers as Ruskin and De Quincey.

Years ago, certain enterprising admirers of Dickens used to point out the unconscious verse into which he lapsed occasionally, as for instance in the death-scene of Little Nell. They did not realise that this hybrid prose, so far from being

[1] In *The Athenæum.*

a token of Dickens's literary greatness, was an indication of his weakness as a stylist. Paraphrasing a familiar line of Tennyson's we might say, prose is not undeveloped poetry, but diverse. Why then speak of poetical prose at all? Because rhythmic beauty, which is other than metrical beauty, may enter into prose as fully as it does into verse. But the rhythm must be the spontaneous, instinctive expression of the writer's imagination.

It has been urged that Morris's prose, choice as it may be, is self-conscious and artificial. The criticism is not to be brushed impatiently aside; it merits consideration. The epithet "self-conscious" may be accepted without accepting its implied reproach. The deliberate eclecticism of Art necessitates self-consciousness. Whether a man uses words, pigments or clay, he does so with the definite intention of achieving a specific result by employing certain methods. It is not the quality of self-consciousness, but the *quantity* of self-consciousness, that affects a man's work adversely. It is when it so far dominates him, when his manner of speaking becomes more important to him than the matter he is speaking, that we may deprecate it.

This criticism could not fairly be urged

Photo *Hollyer*

MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS
From a painting by D. G. Rossetti

against the prose romances. Art when manner is paramount becomes artifice. Is manner paramount with Morris? In the earlier romances, certainly not. With the exception of a few archaisms which suggest an occasional mannerism, manner and matter are wonderfully fused together, and we have a large, deliberate, fastidious and rhythmic style as well-suited to the subject matter as was the elaborate, embroidered, fantastic style of Lamb suited to his subtle conceits and tender whimsicalities. Of the later work one must speak less confidently.

Having succeeded so admirably in verse, what was it that induced Morris to change his medium, especially when he did not change his fundamental poetic attitude?

His reason, we are told, was his conviction that the day of narrative poetry was over. He was, of course, a narrative poet of the first order. He was fully aware of his mastery in this domain, but he imagined that the English public had tired of it. The chill reception of *Sigurd*, no doubt, had affected him. He had given them of his best, and they had passed it by. It is quite true that both *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* had proved immensely popular; this was rather in the nature of a happy

accident. Once, in the days of Scott and Byron, narrative verse was the fashion of the day. Its appeal was weak to a generation that loved Tennyson and was beginning to interest itself in Browning.

Three possibilities presented themselves. Failing verse, Morris, with his poignant sense of what was wrong with the world, could elect for ordinary prose fiction. Why not a novel with a purpose ; another *Alton Locke?* But Morris's distaste for modern conditions of life was far too strong to allow him to do this. Some rough attempt he did make at one time, but it was a half-hearted affair and soon put aside.

There was poetical drama. Already, in *Love is Enough,* he had essayed that medium. But it did not suit him. Dramatic he could be in a disjointed, episodic way, as his early poems testify ; but to sustain it was not in his power. Besides, he had grown to dislike blank verse, and more and more did the pictorial, apart from the dramatic aspect of life, appeal to him.

After all, drama demands the stereoscopic not the dioramic imagination : it clamours for perspective, substantiality, not for clear-cut, smooth surfaces.

There remained romantic prose, fashioned

after the style of the old sagas, which were already part of his flesh and blood; and romantic prose he annexed.

These old sagas had become so bound up with his imaginative life, that now they sent forth grafts and blossoms of their own.

The prose tales, like the narrative stories, are mediæval in inspiration. As pieces of artistry they do not rival *Sigurd*, or *The Earthly Paradise;* at times, indeed, they are inferior, because they are too deliberately fashioned; but for all that they are Morris's children in a sense that the narrative poems are not, and they are, because of that, the most characteristic and individual things he ever achieved.

Romance is not congenial to the English mind. The qualities it calls for—gaiety, fantasy, flexibility, above all, colour and movement, these things so natural to Southern peoples, are alien to our genius. Indeed, the very word itself signifies its Southern origin.

The Arthurian Legend, which we regard as our own special property, is almost entirely derived from foreign sources. Its romantic interest lies in the loves of Launcelot and Guenevere, in the visions of Sir Galahad, in the tragic passion of Tristan and Iseult, and in the mystic beauty of the Quest of the Holy Grail.

Without these the Legend becomes a sombre epic of battle, murder and sudden death; and yet, of course, all these stories that give warmth and tenderness, grace and fantasy, are of foreign growth—French afterthoughts to the original theme. The old Celtic legend knows nothing of them.

It is well for us then that the Norman visited our shores, bringing with him the ark of the covenant of the born story-teller.

That the South is the natural home of romance is sufficiently illustrated by the methods of our great masters of literature. Shakespeare's romantic plays exhale the sunshine of the South: Verona, Venice, Bohemia, Athens—of such are the Kingdom of Romance. It is the bleak uplands of the North which lend primitive significance to *Lear* and *Macbeth*.

There was Welsh blood in Morris's veins, and his work reveals the brooding, sombre imagination of the Cymric Celt. But his mind is not purely Celtic. It was saturated with mediæval romance; and had assimilated much of the rich discursiveness of the South. The result is a curious blend of Northern intensity and Southern flexibility.

Thus it is this curious blend of Celtic reserve, intensity and primal passion, with the plastic

graces of the typical romancer, that gives his prose tales their distinctive interest.

Examine them carefully and we realise at once how they lack that lively play of fancy, that wealth of detail, those touches of characterisation, that joyous irresponsibility, peculiar to mediæval romance : they are austerely simple, straightforward and restrained. Yet, the sterner, harsher, more poignant aspects of the saga are softened and modified. There is more than a touch of Northern melancholy ; but the fundamental note is joyous. The idealised picture of humanity it leaves is akin to the large and virile sagas of the North; with its insistence on fidelity, endurance, patience, high endeavour : but the coarser and bleaker elements of these Norse legends are absent.

Morris's Romances are nine in number. Of these, two embody his Communistic ideas—*The Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*—the one a hark back to the past, the other a look forward to some Golden Future. The remaining stories are frankly fairy tales—situated in that pleasant world of Morris-land, where both Icelandic scenery and the gentle environment of the Thames Valley melt imperceptibly into one another like dissolving pictures, and where the national characteristics

of Greek, Teuton and Viking are blended together by some alchemy, of which Morris had the secret. The predominant note, as has been said, is Northern. Much as Morris loved the *Arabian Nights*, there is nothing of the ardent richness of the East in his fantastic tales: Orientalism was foreign to his nature, and the faery music of his tales was never heard by Haroun Alraschid. Meredith alone of modern writers, in his splendid *tour de force*, *The Shaving of Shagpat*, has reproduced for us the mystic spirit of the Thousand and One Nights. It was not in Morris's temperament to do so; for all the play of fantasy in these stories, there is no real mysticism. His work shows no trace of that delicious quaintness and *grotesquerie* that may be found in the old German romances. Fairy lore served him as one of his myriad methods of decoration: and the spells and sorceries that he scatters freely are pictorial excrescences, not something wrought out of his spiritual experience.

Morris's Northern preferences are shown not merely in the men and women of his tales and the customs he depicts, but in the very phraseology. The Saxon and Danish elements in our language are used with a freedom that is sometimes tiresome; and the archaic terms that

abound in the later tales especially, are of no slight vexation to the ordinary reader, quaint and melodious as some of them are. "Speech-friend," for example, one is glad to have, and there is a welcome old-world flavour about "songcraft" for poetry, and "wood-abider" for forester. Others are less welcome, and we feel towards them somewhat as visitors must have felt to the strange and uncertain pets that Rossetti harboured.

To some, the long, sinuous prose is a vexation. We live in an age when a staccato style is the fashion, and are apt to resent an ampler and more discursive method. But Morris's style, though full-bodied and discursive, is never prolix, never involved. The cadences are long, but as clear as they are sweet. For at bottom, and despite an excessive archaism at times, it is a strong and simple style, utterly devoid of pretentiousness and meretricious rhetoric. Whether Morris's fondness for archaism led him at times across the border-line that divides great prose from mannered pose, is an arguable matter. Despite the opulent beauty of his latest romances, the ordinary reader's enjoyment is certainly chastened by the need of a glossary. But Morris wrote primarily to please himself. If you could not follow him, so much the worse

for you. After all, it resolves itself into a nice point of æsthetic morality. A more important point is, that it was no pose: no stylist was ever more sincere in his eclecticism than Morris.

The elaborate framework of the prose is due to the fact that the craftsman in Morris increasingly obtrudes itself in his literary work during later years. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to forget he is telling a story in words and not in silk; and his descriptions of Nature, are Nature on a tapestried background, not, as they should be, the Nature of the open-air observer (and could have been in his case).

So technical are some of his phrases—as for instance when he speaks of "well-wrought little blossoms,"—that one of his best critics, Mr. Arthur Symons, has said: "He beheld a golden and green and blue earth, in which the fashion of the world is like that coloured flat-surfaced thing which the painters before perspective made into pictures." Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in one of his amusing critical perversities, has played with this peculiarity still further, hinting that Morris was satisfied with a "flat felicity," and felt that all was not well unless the hero's chestnut hair harmonised with the deep blue background.

Mr. Chesterton is far too sane a critic really,

to make of an artistic convention a psychological idiosyncrasy ; though he would have us think otherwise ; but the insistence with which Morris pursues the merely decorative standpoint not infrequently does scant justice to his unaffected and passionate earth-worship. The convention—and convention it is—was certainly not a pose (though some of his followers turned it into a pose), and I do not think Morris was conscious of it. But for so long had he worked as a craftsman, and with such hearty enthusiasm engrossed himself with every variety of decorative handiwork, that the craftsman's standpoint had very largely become habitual.

He forgot to change it ; just as he forgot to remove the dye from his hair when the day's work was finished.

Yet about Morris's love of Nature there can be no question. Rossetti's pictures of Nature smack of the artist's studio rather than the open air. But Morris's quaint technicalities of speech, notwithstanding, are redolent of the open. He may do homage in a craftsman's dress, but there is no mistaking the homage. Beneath the decorative conventions there lies a warm, vivid humanity, and so exquisite an appreciation of the potential poetry of the earth, that we rise from the tales as if emerging

from a journey through lovely country, with our sense of beauty intensified, and our soul freshened. The hand may be the hand of the craftsman, but the voice is the voice of the idealist. His woods may remind one in appearance more of the weaver of silks than the weaver of dreams, but approach them and they are as vital and magical as the Woods of Westermain.

In his prose, as in his verse, Morris kept before him the same ideal. He chose among the elements of human life those elements which made for beauty. Beauty to him was the first word in life, because it was the key to Life. Work, if not a joy to the maker *and* the user, ceased to be beautiful for Morris. Ugliness, in his view, did more than offend the eye, it deadened the soul. So, with all the persuasiveness at his command, he emphasised in his romances what is fair and gracious in the world.

Seeing so much in modern conditions to vex and fret, he chose for the setting of his stories, sometimes a mediæval England unspoiled by commercialism, at other times the undiscovered country of Noman's Land, in which he fashioned a new earth where men and women lived simply and sanely.

X

SOME COMPARISONS

MORRIS'S romances stand in a class apart by themselves. It is true that in common with romances all the world over, from Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* down to the *New Arabian Nights* of Stevenson, they blend in their imaginings, adventure and fantasy. But when one has said that—which after all is little—one has said all.

Let us take three famous modern romancers and compare them with Morris ; they will serve to bring out interesting points of likeness and divergence.

Scott occurs naturally to the mind, first of all ; for Scott also loved the Middle Ages, and sought in their colour and movement stuff of matter for his stories.

But the mediævalism of Morris is not the mediævalism of Scott. Scott loved the Middle Ages because of the stir and bustle of life. As

a romancer he found in its glittering pageantry and its blend of savagery and religious devotion ample material for amusement and interest. To Morris, on the other hand, it was not stuff of matter for story-telling but stuff of matter for social ideals that attracted him; it was because he felt that, its drawbacks notwithstanding, there was more scope for genuine individuality in those times. In this respect Morris's view approximates more to that of Carlyle's in his *Past and Present.*

Scott was not an idealist. He was not even primarily an historical novelist. He painted human nature frankly as he found it: his stage-setting is picturesque and vivid enough, and his instinct for old-world customs gives a "local habitation and a name" to his stories of the past. But, after all, the best part of Scott lay in his power of painting the Scottish folk as he saw them; and the one point in his characterisation in which he approximates to Morris is his preference for strong, simple, kindly natures.

Morris, on the other hand, is an inveterate idealist. He has no intention of painting human nature as he found it, but as he wished to find it. He paints men and women as they might be. His imaginative characters are as real—and no

more real—than the witches and wizards of fairy legend; and can scarcely be judged by ordinary human standards.

Consider another romancer of quite another type—Hawthorne. Like Morris, Hawthorne is an idealist, and like Morris he employs fantasy to embellish his romances.

But fantasy is not a graceful decoration as it is to Morris; in the hands of Hawthorne it serves as a symbol for his innate Puritanism. Morris in his characterisation is broad not subtle, general not specific—and the people of his tales are simple and primal for the most part. Hawthorne is exactly the reverse. His imagination is fine and subtle; and he is at heart a psychological critic rather than a story-teller. There is a certain coldness about his tales, which contrasts strikingly with the warmth of Morris's romances.

A subtler observer than Morris along his own lines, and more delicate in insight, he lacks the latter's wide and intimate experience of Life. Hawthorne is nearly always preoccupied in his fiction with Passion in some form or another—but it is Passion approached from the intellectual standpoint. Morris is not concerned, except in the most general way, with Passion, but his standpoint is artistic, not intellectual.

He paints it, humanises it : never analyses nor moralises over it.

Lastly, Hawthorne—is a lover of " the brown twilight " : Morris gives his allegiance to the bright sunlight. It is the fantasy of the day, not the fantasy of the night that interests him.

As a third type of romancer, we may take a contemporary of Morris—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Stevenson, more than Scott and Hawthorne, attached importance to the form and visage of his tales. He chooses his words with the deliberate fastidiousness of the artist bent on creating a certain atmosphere ; and to this extent he and Morris have a characteristic in common.

The view of Morris that wit and humour are to be excluded from poetry finds no place in the scheme of Stevenson, and the note of elfin mockery which accompanies the author of *Treasure Island* and the *New Arabian Nights* is alien to the weightier and more masculine genius of Morris. Comparison, indeed, only serves to show how individual a note Morris strikes. Each of these three great romancers has a school of his own ; yet Morris, despite certain points of contact, belongs to none.

That his romances appeal as widely as do

those of the three story-tellers with whom I have compared him, no one would seriously maintain. But the genre of his work is fundamentally so different that comparison for the purpose of appraising one at the expense of the other were futile.

The Kingdom of Romance has many provinces ; and there is room for all.

Meredith once declared that he was concerned in his novels with the difference between "primitive man and civilised man : Adam and Macadam." Morris's concern was entirely with Adam, but with Adam in a Paradise regained ; and it is this elemental appeal which is the first thing to strike us in the romances. They are warm-blooded and full-blooded. It is quite obvious that the ascetic aspects of mediævalism never took hold of Morris. With Browning, he believed whole-heartedly in the sacramental value of Passion. Coldness, indifference, timidity, superficiality ; these were the deadly sins in Morris's view: given Passion, he would forgive a man almost any breach of the Decalogue.

A story is told of a certain volcanic and aggressive gentleman, whom a pacific relative tried to lull into a gentler and more docile frame of mind. To this purpose he read him passages from *Paradise Lost* ; and to his relief found the

volcano an attentive listener. At last, the reader came to the point where the Arch-Rebel declares he would rather rule in Hell than serve in Heaven. Excited by the protest, the other shouted out : " A damned good fellow too, and I *hope he'll win !* "—to the comic discomfiture of his relative.

One can imagine that Morris would have a certain sympathy with this tempestuous standpoint. Certainly he would much rather have linked arms with Lucifer than suffered the vagaries of a Mr. Ready-to-Halt.

This is why he was attracted so perpetually to the North; he saw beneath all the lust, savagery and cruelty, a greatness that he missed in the smoother, more restrained, more equable life of the day.

Of loving, and hating, and striving, these romances are full ; the passions depicted have nothing modern about them. The morbid eroticism and sneaking prurience that taints so much modern fiction is quite alien to the world of Morris.

There is a frank animalism, an outspoken earthiness, which is wholly beautiful, because of its frankness and simplicity. The people of Morris-land are naked and not ashamed.

In his sexual outlook there is something of the

easy, open-air spaciousness that we find in Whitman. But Morris, unlike Whitman, was an artist first and foremost, and he never misses the *poetry* of animalism; as readers of *The Earthly Paradise*, and the prose romances especially, know full well.

Animalism, merely as a scientific fact, serves naught to the romancer unless he can show also—what is as undeniable as the bare fact—its poetry. Its coarseness and its mystery go together. Browning has put it in a line:

> ". . . savage creatures seek
> Their loves in wood and plain—*and God renews*
> *His ancient rapture.*"

There are few things more beautifully told in modern romance than the love story of Birdalone in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, and the tale of Walter and the Maid in *The Wood beyond the World*. The beauty lies in the simplicity and frankness with which it is told.

"And she murmured over him: O friend, my dear, think not that I had will to hide me from thee. All that is here of me is thine, and thine, and thine.

"And she took his hand, and they arose together, and she said: O friend, I fled from thee once and left thee lonely of me because I deemed need drave me to it; and I feared the

strife of friends, and confusion and tangle. Now if thou wilt avenge thee on me thou mayst, for I am in thy power. Yet will I ask thee what need will drive thee to leave me lonely ?

" He said : The need of death. But she said : Mayhappen we shall lie together then, as here to-night we shall lie."

In a passage such as this, the differences between Romantic literature and Sentimental literature are clearly exhibited. No one ever put the case against sentimentalism more clearly and forcibly than George Meredith. He saw into its unrealities, and had nothing but contempt for the frothy hysteria that simulated passion, and the subtle egotism that posed as tenderness. He pointed out that asceticism and sensuality alike rest on a common basis of sentimentalism. " Nature, though heathenish," he says, " reaches at her best to the footstool of the Highest. Through Nature only can we ascend. St. Simon saw the Hog in Nature and took Nature for the Hog." With this point of view Morris is in fundamental sympathy. Like Meredith, he accepted the Hog, and went beyond it ; like Meredith also, he saw that Romance and Reality are not rivals but organically united.

Romanticism is always bracing : sentimental-

ism is enervating. The curse of much modern fiction is, that when it deals with human life and human passions it deals with them on the surface. Using the language of everyday life, and giving an *appearance* of actuality, unconventionality and passion, the stories yield, on analysis, an utterly superficial view of life, and show either a deep-rooted distrust or a cynical acceptance of the primal instincts of human nature. Morris's treatment is exactly the reverse ; the form of his tales is conventional and not in any way idiosyncratic ; but the substance is wrought out of the stuff of humanity.

The elemental appeal in Morris, then, is a quality that gives not merely an artistic charm to his stories but a wholesome vigour. The romances of Morris are full of the open air, and brace the mind and imagination : they breathe of the springtime, and bring with them all its benison of strength.

" And it was an early morning of late spring, and the sky was clear blue, and the sun shining bright, and birds singing in the garden of the house, and in the street was the sound of the early market folk passing through the streets with their wares ; and all was fresh and lovely."

" Fresh and lovely "—how typical of the elemental appeal !

XI

THE TIME AND THE PLACE

A TYPICAL specimen of Morris's romantic method is *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, which was written in 1890, shortly after the publication of *News from Nowhere*.

While lacking the fantastic charm of *The Wood beyond the World* on the one hand, or the social idealism of *John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* on the other, it yet blends the qualities of fantasy and idealism more completely and happily than any other of the romances.

To one Hallblithe, sitting by the seashore "hafting a spear," there comes a rumour of a land wherein reigns eternal Spring and eternal Youth; and with this rumour is borne the disquieting news of the stealing away by the sea-ravagers of a girl to whom Hallblithe had pledged his love.

Immediately he goes in search of her, and after many adventures comes to the Land of the

Glittering Plain where he had dreamed the Maid had been taken. This is the Country of Eternal Youth and Spring, but he does not find the Maiden here, for in truth he had been beguiled here by the daughter of the King, who, seeing his picture in a book, had fallen in love with it, and desired the original. It is a wonderful land, for all who touch the soil are transformed. There is one Sea Eagle, old, querulous, and evil natured, who so soon as he touches the verdure of the land becomes a brave and kind soul: his qualities are not widely diverse, for in temperament he is the same—but the whole nature is sweetened and deepened. Another character, Puny Fox, a rascal and a liar, yet not without a touch of Stevenson's roguish charm, becomes as attractive as Autolycus himself—a vagrant true, but a fine-hearted vagrant.

The Land itself is depicted with all Morris's skill for colour effects. "Now let us be glad, for Life liveth," cries Sea Eagle. Yet despite all its sunshine and sweetness, Hallblithe keeps in his heart a fierce irrational longing for the grey seas and bleak uplands of his native country. Here truly is the land of Immortality, the realm of the undying, such a place as the wanderers dream of in *The Earthly Paradise;*

but—and herein lies the difference between the Poet and the Prose Romancer—Death and Sorrow are no longer evil things to be shunned, but rather matters that deepen and strengthen human existence.

These happy folk are to Hallblithe "light made and careless." He knows that outside the magic land is "battle and famine, longing unsatisfied, and heart-burning and fear;" but for all that he yearns to be away; the homing instinct is strong and ineradicable. He would give up all this gracious life for the sight, once more, of his grey Northern home.

Blent with this fairy world of bliss there is the deeper note of the re-fashioning of ordinary life as it might be. In part we are reminded of Browning's delightful—"A King lived long ago, in the morning of the world." For here in this purely ideal region, we have life as it might be, but never is, save as an inspiration in the Poet's heart.

It is a kind of *Odyssey*, where we do not know "where is the dusk and where the dawn." It is instinct with beautiful imaginings, and of brave and lovable figures; yet it is not merely a fairy world, but a dream place for all human beings. Its very vagueness is part of its charm. Such things should be vague, and perhaps the

least satisfying part of the reconstituted world in *News from Nowhere* are the detailed touches of the re-fashioned life. After all, who cares about having a complete inventory of furniture in a dream castle.

One question that the modern reader invariably asks of a story-writer is: What is his attitude towards Woman? So, if you wish to place a novelist you have only to look at his feminine characterisations. You can tell more of Meredith from his portrait of Diana or Clara Middleton than from all the rest of *Diana of the Crossways* and *The Egoist.* Ruth Pinch and Amelia Sedley reflect as clearly early Victorian ideals as Dorothea Casaubon and Clara Middleton do later Victorian; and although you do not expect from a romancer that psychological elaboration which you look for in the analytic novelist, yet a man's attitude towards Woman must express itself in his Art for it is part of his general attitude towards Life.

One great difference between Tennyson and Browning is that the women of Browning are quick, intelligent, noble women—the genuine comrades of men: whereas, with all their external graces, the women of Tennyson are an inferior race, sweetly submissive to the all-

conquering male. That they have charm and tenderness may be admitted; but deprived of their picturesque accessories, they will be found to be almost entirely of the passive type, and colourless in individuality. Even *Maud*, though enshrined in some of the loveliest lyrics in the English language, fades to a shadow beside such studies of womanhood as Palma, Pompilia, Balaustion. Browning, of course, is a psychological poet, which Morris (with a few rare exceptions) is not. Yet Morris's women are quite as unmistakable in their gracious nobility, though they are more primal in texture. Sisters surely of Meredith's:

> ". . . troops of maids, brown as burnt heather bells,
> And rich with life as moss roots breathe of earth
> In the first plucking of them."

What Meredith suggests in a line Morris paints at full length again and again. I should be tempted to say that women like The Maid, Birdalone, The Friend, The Bride, were unique in the woodlands of Romance were it not for early memories of another master of fairy romance—George Macdonald. Long before I knew that George Macdonald had preceded Morris as dweller in Kelmscott House—known in Macdonald's time as The Retreat—I had felt the presence of an imaginative affinity between

the romances of the Celtic Morris and the Gaelic Macdonald.

It is a strange thing that the fantasies of Macdonald should be so little known. For nine people who know his novels well, only one can be found with a cursory acquaintance with his romances. Yet surely the real genius of the man lay in his romances; his other work merely displays his talent, just as the genius of William Sharp lay in *Fiona Macleod.*

Many of Macdonald's romances were written for children, and no stories—save those of the imperishable Andersen—have a surer and more intimate magic than *The Princess and the Goblin, Curdie and the Princess,* and *At the Back of the North Wind.* Others, intended for older readers, are equally fresh, and deeper in feeling; *Phantastes* may well take its place beside *The Wood beyond the World.* Morris alone could have drawn a companion picture to the terrible White Lady, or the Maiden of the Beech Tree.

The comparison must not, of course, be pressed unduly. There is a sense of mystery in Macdonald's tales—*The Portent,* for instance—alien to Morris's genius. Morris, on the other hand, is free from the didactic note that sounds persistently, though not aggressively, in Mac-

donald's work. Macdonald wrote often for children; Morris always for men and women. Macdonald has the livelier fancy; Morris the richer style. But both writers leave on the mind an ineffaceable impression of primal beauty and strength. One likes to think that something of the fragrance of Macdonald's work hung over the garden at Kelmscott House, and invaded the mind of Morris, stirring him to kindred visions.

Morris writes as a poetical Romancer of course, and is concerned with woman rather than the women of a particular age, so there is no breath of political controversy in his sexual relationships, no hint of feminine emancipation in these nameless regions and dateless climes. But the women would satisfy, I should imagine, the fiercest vindicator of Woman's Rights, for while never lacking in the distinctive feminine qualities of tenderness and graciousness, their minds are as luminous as their hearts, and they take an equal share with men in the work of the community. They are indeed at once, lovers, counsellors, and friends.

Of Morris's love of the Earth I have spoken already. No romancer worth his salt is without it, but in Morris's case the love he felt for the

earth had a special personal intensity that colours all his work.

Thus we find in his Nature pictures a profusion of loving detail, such as we might expect from one to whom every phase of the earth and every expression of its growth is a joy.

"Now they rode fair and softly by thicket and copse and glade of the woodland, following up the stream aforesaid for the most part, till at last the trees failed them suddenly, and they came forth on to a wide green plain, all unbuilded, so far as their eyes could see, and beyond it the ridges of the hills and blue mountains rising high beyond them.

"When Birdalone's eyes beheld this new thing, of a sudden all care left her, and she dropped her rein, and smote her palms together, and cried out: 'Oh! but thou art beautiful; O earth, thou art beautiful!' Then she sat gazing on it, while the greyhead turned and smiled on her, well pleased of her pleasure." [1]

Greatly as he admired the rugged grandeur of Iceland, it was not the type of country which held his affections.

For that we must seek the Thames Valley: and most of his scenic pictures have that mingling of woodland, meadowland, and water.

[1] *Water of the Wondrous Isles.*

With what loving fidelity and clearness he paints his own Kelmscott in *News from Nowhere:*

"On we went, turning a sharp angle and going north a little. Presently we saw before us a bank of elm trees, which told us of a house amidst them. . . . In a few minutes we had passed through a deep eddying pool into the sharp stream that ran from the ford, and beached our craft on a tiny strand of limestone gravel, and stepped ashore. . . .

"Mounting on the cart-road that ran along the river some feet above the water, I looked round about me. The river came down through a wide meadow on my left, which was grey now with the ripened seeding grasses; the gleaming water was lost presently by a turn of the bank, but over the meadow I could see the mingled gables of a building where I knew the lock must be. . . . A low wooded ridge bounded the river-plain to the south and south-east, whence we had come, and a few low houses lay about its feet and up its slope. I turned a little to my right, and through the hawthorn sprays and long shoots of the wild roses could see the flat country spreading out far away under the sun of the calm evening, till something that might be called hills with a look of sheep-pastures about them bounded it with a soft blue line. Before me, the elm boughs still hid most of what houses there might be in this

river-side dwelling of men; but to the right of the cart-road a few grey buildings of the simplest kind showed here and there.

. . . . . .

"My feet moved on along the road they knew. The raised way led us into a little field bounded by a backwater of the river on one side; on the right hand we could see a cluster of small houses and barns, and before us a grey stone barn and a wall partly overgrown with ivy, over which a few grey gables showed. The village road ended in the shallow of the backwater. We crossed the road, and my hand raised the latch of a door in the wall, and we stood presently on a stone path which led up to the old house. The garden between the wall and the house was redolent of the June flowers, and the roses were rolling over one another with that delicious superabundance of small well-tended gardens which at first sight takes away all thought save that of beauty. The blackbirds were singing their loudest, the doves were cooing on the roof-ridge, the rooks in the high elm trees beyond were garrulous among the young leaves, and the swifts wheeled whining about the gables. And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heart of summer."

And with the same clarity as he paints his Nature setting, he paints the men and women of his tales.

His own definite attitude towards life is the most clearly seen in his two Utopian romances. Not that the careful reader may not gather it from the romances all and sundry, but it is given with greater amplitude of detail in those two books.

These, the best known of all his works, need little comment here. Into the finely written speech of Ball himself, Morris expressed his own views relating to Art and Life ; and in its counterpart, *News from Nowhere*, he illustrates with a beauty and force that would touch many for whom his polemical speeches were as idle words the joy of the craftsman in his work.

In *John Ball* he had depicted English Society at the crumbling away of the rigid Feudal System ; contrasting the comparatively free and joyous life of the workman then with the workman of the late nineteenth century. What Society might be in the future is the concern of the later book ; naturally all that seemed to him good and inspiring in Modern Life he projects into this Utopia, and to it he adds a picture of communistic life. With the precise character of the re-fashioned society I am not concerned here. But however its form may attract or repel us, the underlying vision is clear, unequivocal, and indisputable. Joy in labour,

joy in play; honesty, brotherhood, comradeship. A people who should, while loving peace, be prepared to fight any dragon that threatened human contentment. A people who should love the earth, and all work that should increase the beauty and richness of the earth. A people for whom class distinction was a thing unknown —acknowledging only men and women. A people, moreover, honouring its women, treating them as comrades and co-workers in every department of life.

News from Nowhere has a special interest, inasmuch as it was Morris's rejoinder to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. In literary grace and charm it is fully equal to its predecessor, *The Dream of John Ball*. And, as a pleasant and attractive picture of pastoral communistic life, it certainly outshines the materialistic vision of Bellamy.

In its indictment of our present social system few thoughtful people would disagree. In its constructive programme for a new world we are necessarily on more debatable ground. One of the distinctive features of the new world fashioned by the writer is the sturdy confidence which Morris places in the average man. There are no experienced supervisory magistrates, as in Mr. H. G. Wells's *Utopia*, curbing the impulses

of ordinary human nature. There is no governing class at all. There is a general assembly—the Mote—to which all may come; and what the majority will carries the day. But the absence of a governing class is not the only significant omission. There is neither army, navy, nor police; and punishment is unknown. Army and navy are not wanted, inasmuch as nationality merely exists as a psychical fact not a political one. "Nowhere" is situated in a happy world where distinctions of State and Civilisation are unknown. This is one of the postulates of the book. How the world has been brought to this happy state of brotherhood there is no attempt to describe. It exists. Legal machinery endures, Morris points out, to protect property. Now that there is no private property, the lawyer is not wanted. Deeds of violence were not as yet unknown, but were practically negligible since private ownership had been the cause of most crime in times past.

In the general drift of the book against superfluous luxury, the Utopian dream of the sixteenth century and the nineteenth are at one. But there is nothing in Morris of the ascetic note discernible in Sir Thomas More's little picture. More, disgusted with the extravagant custom of his day in the matter of dress, counsels an

austere simplicity that threatens an extinction of colour.

Morris wrote as an artist. He has realised, moreover, that beauty of dress is not synonymous with costliness and extravagance. In this respect an interesting parallel may be drawn between Bacon's "ideal state" as limned in *The New Atlantis* and *News from Nowhere*. Bacon had the Eastern love of colour; and he arrays his citizens in fine raiment. But it is choice and tasteful; and the thread of colour runs through both books: to both a certain external splendour seemed a right and proper thing.

Apart from this point, the tenour of Morris's mind is far more in tune with that of the sixteenth century reformer than with the forerunner of modern science. For in social matters, Bacon was essentially an aristocrat and a conservative, whereas More is essentially a democrat and in many points surprisingly like the democratic socialist. His remark that "the chief end of the Constitution is to regulate labour by the necessities of the public, and to allow all the people as much time as is necessary for the improvement of their minds in which they think the happiness of life consists," is quite in harmony with Morris's fundamental point of view, though Morris would have

expressed it in other language. Further, More's dictum, that "every man has by the law of nature a right to such a waste portion of the Earth as is necessary for his subsistence," has quite a communistic ring about it! One can well understand Morris's liking for More's *Utopia*.

Regarding Morris's book as a whole, it has, quite apart from its literary beauty and social fervour, an historical interest for the student, in showing the particular type of Socialism which many reformers in the 'eighties were contriving to bring about. On the one side we have the elaborate Town socialism (if one may call it so) of Bellamy; on the other, the Rural socialism of Morris. Each had its adherents. There can be no question as to which is the finer ideal, and even those who see grave defects in Morris's constructive picture could not deny its greater imaginative beauty and desirability.

Much criticism has been expended upon the communistic setting of this book. I am not concerned here to defend or refute it; for it does not seem to matter very much. The elaboration of details is interesting, for it shows the cast of Morris's mind. How many are practicable, how many impracticable, is a minor matter beside the dynamic value of the story as

a picture of idealised human nature. This is the great thing about the book—it is the great thing in all Morris's books. Dialectically, few writers are more provocative than Morris. As a poet with a high sense of the essential beauty of human nature and the potentialities of humanity, he never fails to hold our sympathies.

The Romances have been called rambling and meandering. So they are; but that is no more against them than it is against a stream or a country lane. It is part of their merit, and not the least part. Despite their attractive incoherence of form they never lack clarity of intention or lucidity of detail.

Clearness of vision is not necessarily linked with actuality of presentment. That atmosphere of aloofness which hangs like a delicate haze over the narrative poems and gives the scenes a dreamlike unsubstantiality at times, affects also the prose romances. It may or may not take the edge off the reader's enjoyment. If he be a confirmed novel reader, with a distaste for the methods of poetic art, it is highly probable he will take exception to this aloofness; not unlikely, moreover, that he will confuse this poetic quality with a vagueness of imaginative vision. In that he would be wrong. No critic has more delicately appreciated and

subtly appraised Morris's art in this respect than Mr. Watts-Dunton.

"While nearness is the quest of the worker in prose fiction, remoteness may be, and often is, the legitimate quest of the poet. These stories are in atmosphere far more remote than the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's quest was nearness of suggestion, and this is what makes him so much more modern than a prose-writer like Malory, so much more modern than a poet like Spenser. Even when Morris modelled his work in some measure upon Chaucer's, he never achieved Chaucer's nearness of atmosphere: perhaps he never tried to do so."

A contributory element to this aloofness or what Mr. Watts-Dunton calls remoteness, is suggested.

"It would almost seem that, in order to find a substitute for that aid which metre can give to the poet whose object is to produce a sense of remoteness, Morris in these stories goes out of his way to surround the dramatic action with all kinds of improbabilities. When Shakespeare introduced lions into the forest of Arden it was not done in order to produce remoteness; for the acted drama of the modern world, whether written in verse or prose, is unlike the acted drama of Greece in this, that it takes a place between prose fiction, whose quest is full illusion, and unadulterated poetry, whose quest is

partial illusion. Shakespeare introduced his lions because the audience of his time would scarcely have felt that a forest in foreign lands would be complete without them. But why does Morris introduce lions (and apparently the entire fauna of Africa) into European forests, unless it is to secure remoteness, and so give a reason for the archaic nature of his form ? "

The Chaucerian contrast is both interesting and pertinent. Far too much has been made by some of Morris's critics of the supposed similarities between the epic power of Morris and Chaucer. Nothing, however, could be less like Chaucer's dramatic actuality than the pictorial figures of Morris, both in his narrative verse and prose romances. The characters are conceived clearly enough ; but we see them only in silhouette as it were. We can see all round Chaucer's men and women. Curiously enough, in his earlier work Morris is far more psychological. *Guenevere* is worthy of Browning's synthetic genius for presenting character. It is easy to understand why Morris should have thought this method unsuited to such work as *Jason* or *The Earthly Paradise* : less easy to appreciate his psychological frugality when writing the prose romances.

However, while recognising these limitations,

the Poet's clarity of vision remains unimpaired, and to those willing to surrender themselves to his discursive magic, there is no ambiguity, nor obscurity, in the fairy world through which we accompany him.

The artistic sympathies of Morris must be fully allowed for in any estimate of his fundamental attitude towards life. He has been called a Pagan, and a Pagan he certainly was in the classic sense of the term, not in the sense in which it is often used to-day.

His perceptive life was extraordinarily rich ; his powers of speculation slight. Frankly uninterested in matters of philosophy, he had never formulated any intellectual concept of life, and even in his devotional days it was the æsthetics rather than the dialectics of religion that appealed to him. He did not pass, as some have done, from mysticism to rationalism. A mystic he had never been and a rationalist he never became. The polemics of a Bradlaugh or Foote moved him as little as the esoteric faith of the East. His artistic sensibilities were jarred by the one, his concrete practicality repelled by the other. He gave up the notion of taking Orders and the æsthetics of Religion at one and the same time, but he always retained a feeling for the religious side of Art,

which is another thing altogether. Theological problems he never discussed, and if some philosophic point were presented to him he ignored it. There was never anything hostile in his attitude towards Christianity; nothing of the militant sceptic about him. No one ever heard him breathe a word of reproach or criticism upon the religious beliefs of others; though he resented anyone obtruding his theological beliefs in company.

But constantly and variously engaged as he was in manifestations of perceptive life, he had, to put it baldly, no use for religion in his scheme of things; and if he had no use for a thing, whatever it might mean to others, for him it was something to be placed on one side. So on one side accordingly it went, just as did the Art of the Renascence, or the scenic beauties of southern Europe. One would not care to say that the insistent questions: Whence come we?—What are we?—Whither are we going?—never presented themselves to his mind, nor touched his inner life. There is probably no man of intelligence on whom these questions do not obtrude at times; and in the period in which Morris lived they were especially prominent; so prominent, indeed, that few men of letters had escaped them, while their burden had deeply

impressed the art of the greatest poets of his day. There was, moreover, in Morris's nature, an inner ring of reserve behind all the rough outspokenness and friendly confidences beyond which his most intimate friends never penetrated. All one can say is, he never spoke on these subjects nor responded when they were broached; while the things which appealed the most intensely to his reason and imagination, were definite, concrete things—a beautiful thing to be made, an ugly thing to be destroyed.

An intimate friend,[1] who had keenly observed him on these matters and who is himself a great student of philosophy, gives it as his opinion that here, as elsewhere, Morris had a good deal of the mediæval attitude of mind. It may well be so. Although his shrewd commonsense and vigorous intelligence rejected the crude superstitions of the Middle Ages; yet there was something left of the mediæval terror of death, the horror of hell, the dread of something after Death—"that undiscovered country." . . . Death was to him, as it was to Chaucer, a "privy thief." That, as we have seen, is sufficiently obvious in his verse and prose romances. But we must look upon this repugnance as something more than the instinctive

[1] Sir W. B. Richmond.

dislike of a very vital nature for decay and dissolution. Many men have a measure of that in their composition: not many are possessed by it to the extent that Morris was. How different his attitude from that of Whitman with his "lovely and soothing death;" of Shelley, or of George Meredith.

It has been said by some that this uneasiness is a necessary sequence of lack of certitude in religious faith. Such a contention is obviously at fault, for Meredith was as much a Pagan as Morris, yet was never troubled by thoughts of the Beyond; and Tennyson, who is definitely Theistic, was frequently depressed by these considerations.

To call it part of Morris's mediævalism, however, and to stop there, admittedly solves no psychological point: all it does is to call attention to a characteristic that is in no way dependent on religious or non-religious views, but accompanies certain natures where the perceptive life is developed out of proportion to the reflective. Is it then to be regarded as a necessary factor in the emotional life of a highly-developed artistic temperament? It is a factor certainly, for the melancholy that accompanies the passion for beauty is largely due to this life hunger.

> "She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu ; . . ."

But it is not a necessary factor, for the artistic temperament often finds a way out : sometimes in the direction of Catholicism, more often in that of Pantheism.

The artist's nature tends instinctively to Pantheism. The wealth of perceptive life facilitates this : form, colour, sound, are for him varying manifestations of one pervasive spirit of beauty that interpenetrates all matter ; and if a man's personality was a simple and unitary matter, every one with a pronounced artistic temperament would be—at any rate potentially—a Pantheist. As a matter of fact, we are creatures with multiple and contradictory personalities bound together with a thread of conscious life, and it is only in rare cases, as with a Shelley or a Goethe, that the philosophy of the perceptive life triumphs.

It has been said by one who knew Morris very well, that had he belonged to any Church, it would probably have been the Roman Catholic Communion. When one realises the strong, passionate strain in Morris's nature that existed alongside of the Artist's soul, need this surprise one ? Passionate natures nearly always favour

authority in matters of belief: sometimes an Infallible Book; sometimes an Infallible Church. The great Protestant and the great Catholic have been men of naturally violent temperaments, as witness the inner life of Calvin, Knox, St. Francis, and St. Augustine.

But Morris did not become a Catholic; there was the bluff, practical side of the man that barred the way here. I mention this, not as any reproach to either Protestant or Catholic, or as a sign of great intellectual acuteness on Morris's part, but merely to emphasise the predominant matter-of-factness of Morris's mental life. Few men of imaginative genius have been so indifferent to any form of speculative thought as was Morris. This is the estimate based on his reported conversations, letters, and writings. The vitality and exuberance of imagination that are forced into definite intellectual channels with some, like Dante, and are spread over varying phases of imaginative activity with others, like Goethe, went in Morris's case entirely in the direction of shaping *concrete things*. The absence of the analytical faculty, the critical spirit in his work, all go to support this contention.

But the artist's delight and continual search for beauty, if it would first express itself in

philosophic dress, none the less makes itself felt, if only faintly, in some dim, emotional unrest. That is what we find in Morris. He has so much grit, so much hearty vitality, that the only way in which it shows itself is in an underlying melancholy that appears ever and anon in the man and his writings.

The note of melancholy might easily have deepened into a despair which would have tinged his Art. Yet, despite the underlying melancholy, the dominant note in Morris's romances is one of joyousness. Nor is this joyousness a mere bravado, a trick of self-deception to make things smoother. Better the melancholy of an Arnold or the fatalism of a FitzGerald than this. No: none who knew Morris could doubt the honesty and soundness of his joyousness; and that it was a firm reality to him is evident by the uplifting power of his imaginative work. How can we account for it?

The reply is: by his infinite belief in Man. If he lacked both the inclination and the power to sing of Heaven and Hell, he had both the inclination and the power to tell of an Earthly Paradise. Morris's romantic vision may have lacked the "light that never was on sea or land," but it was, for all that, a sacred calling; he

realised clearly enough that "without a vision the people perish." The vision for himself was clear and indisputable and he took a joy in actualising it for others.

The joyous atmosphere of his romances is rendered with a quiet, deliberate ease that imparts to it an additional effectiveness. Indeed, the quietude and leisureliness are apt to pall at times; we may forget that it is:

> "Quietude—that's a universe in germ.
> The dormant passion needing but a look
> To burst into immense life."

The strong self-repression of Morris's style affects more powerfully than the devices of all but the finest rhetoric.

"Now when all this hath been said, we have no more to tell about this company of friends, the most of whom had once haunted the lands about the water of the Wondrous Isles, save that their love never sundered, and that they lived without shame and died without fear. So here is an end."

This is the true quality of Joy—a Joy that knows what Sorrow is; a Joy that has faced Pain and thwarted it. The Joy of the fighter and the worker: above all, the Joy of the Poet for whom poetry—to quote the fine words of Hazlitt—"is not a branch of authorship; it is the stuff of which our life is made."

Few realised this more than Morris. It is always springtide when he writes : and there is the freshness and uplifting power of the spring in his romances.

Remote as his pictures of a renovated world may be, he did not, as Shelley did in his Utopian pictures, ignore the past. So far from ignoring the past, he loved phases of it to the point of idolatry, and his Earthly Paradise is a blend of the finer elements in our past history with the enlightenment born of experience that may be ours in the future. Thus it was that in trying to bring Utopia from dreamland into the world of strident actualities, he dropped exhausted by the way. The thoughts of his friends on the blusterous day when the worn-out worker was put to his last rest found no more sympathetic voice than that of Mr. Cunninghame Graham in his memorable pen-picture of the farewell,[1] when, as he describes it :

"No funeral carriages, but country flys driven by red-faced men in moleskin carried the mourners ; and in a pony-cart a farmer, with a face as red as are the bottles in a chemist's window, brought up the rear, driving his shaggy pony with the air of one who drives a hearse.

"Farmer Hobbs's van drew up before the

[1] *The Ipané*, by Cunninghame Graham (Fisher Unwin).

little church which is now rendered famous by the description of the illustrious man who sleeps so close to it. The row of limes, flagged walks, the ample transept and square porch, the row of sundials down the wall, most with their gnomons lost, is known to all the world.

"Time has dealt leniently with it, and the Puritans have stayed their fury at the little cross upon the tower.

"Inside, the church was decorated for a harvest festival, the lamps all wreathed with ears of oats and barley, whilst in the font and in the porch lay pumpkins, carrots, and sheaves of corn—a harvest festival such as Morris perhaps had planned, not thinking he himself would be the chiefest firstfruit.

"Standing amongst the wet grass of the graves, artists and Socialists, with friends, relations, and the casual spectators, a group of yokels faced us, gaping at nothing, after the fashion of themselves and of their animals. And then I fancied for a moment that the strong oak coffin, with its wrought-iron handles and pall of Anatolian velvet, was opened, and I saw the waxen face and features of the dead man circled by his beard, and in his shroud, his hands upon his breast, looking like some old Viking in his sleep beside the body of his favourite horse, at the opening of some mound beside the sea in Scandinavia.

"So 'dust to dust' fell idly on my ears, and

in its stead a vision of the England which he dreamed of filled my mind. The little church grew brighter, looking, as it were, filled with the spirit of fuller faith embodied in an ampler ritual.

"John Ball stood by the grave, with him a band of archers all in Lincoln green; birds twittered in the trees, and in the air the scent of apple-blossom and white hawthorn hung. All was much fairer than I had ever seen the country look, fair with a fairness that was never seen in England but by the poet, and yet a fairness with which he laboured to endue it. Once more the mist descended, and my sight grew dimmer; the England of the Fellowship was gone, John Ball had vanished, with him the archers, and in their place remained the knot of countrymen, plough-galled and bent with toil; the little church turned greyer, as if a reformation had passed over it. I looked again, the bluff, bold, kindly face had faded into the north-west wind."

PART V

THE SOCIAL REFORMER

UTOPIA

A land of gracious airs and fragrant ways,
Of strong-souled men and women tender-eyed
Of human hopes and fears love beautified ;
A land oft limned in fancy's golden haze,
And dimly shadowed forth to longing gaze
In the quiet solitude of eventide ;
A clime where fretting cares no longer bide,
Of restful nights and heart-inspiring days :
A land of mellow woods and sunlit streams,
Where mirth and joyous pleasaunces are rife,
A land of April joys and summer dreams,
Of grateful peace from hydra-headed strife,
A world of truth and beauty where one deems
All life is love, and love alone is life !

XII

BEAUTY AND SOCIOLOGY

THERE is no term more thumbed and worn by common usage than that of social reformer, and like many epithets looked upon as self-explanatory, it merits some measure of critical consideration. Directly we examine it we realise how nebulous are its customary demarcations. Every political pioneer or economic experimentalist is dubbed a social reformer, and the term is applied indiscriminately alike to the prophetic genius with a cosmic vision, and the whimsy crank who mistakes fads for principles. Yet, differing as these men do in character and temperament no less than in power and insight, there is a common psychological denominator that may be found. In other words there is the reformic temperament (if I may coin such a phrase) as well as the poetic temperament. Sometimes the two coincide, as in the case of Shelley, but this by no means follows necessarily, and is indeed unusual, for the poet is an artist and the

eclecticism and aristocratic leanings of the artist do not favour the reformer's attitude of mind. What is this attitude of mind? What is the reformic temperament?[1]

The poet expresses himself in song; praise and desire alternate in his ideal world. He can no more help expressing himself in rhythmic melody than he can refrain from smiling or weeping. The reformer can only obtain self-expression by giving full scope to his altruistic impulses. He finds his lyrics in committees and his epics in organisation. In each case both do the work they are best qualified to do by natural endowment. Training and cultivation play a part no doubt in shaping their activities and giving them value. But the impulse comes from within; it is innate, instinctive, the gift of the gods, like a swift foot or a far-seeing eye.

Yet, though united in aim, reformers differ as widely in personality as do poets themselves. Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish three different types of social reformer:

(1) The Humanitarian reformer;
(2) The Intellectual reformer;
(3) The Æsthetic reformer.

[1] In Shelley's case the two attitudes never really blended. Shelley was at his best as a singer when he forgot the reformer; and his lyrical genius gives a note of aloofness to his social gospel.

Sentiment, no doubt, plays a part in all reform, and some measure of intellectual conviction is essential for any intelligent criticism of society, nor can artistic feeling be ruled out from (1) and (2). But there is an emphatic predominance of one particular characteristic that differentiates these pioneers of progress.

The *Humanitarian* reformer approaches the problem largely from the emotional standpoint. He is moved by "the sense of tears in mortal things:" his sympathies are roused by the pain and misery he beholds around him. If he cannot put an end to it, he must, he feels, do what he can to alleviate it. Reformers of this type, if theologically inclined, often join Christian Socialist organisations: where religious prepossessions are lacking they tend towards anarchism. Their strong point lies in their emotional stimulus—the mainspring of their activities—which is obvious and contagious. Thus they rally round them more adherents probably than either of the other types. They excel in the histrionics of reform, and achieve the most useful results when their exertions are fused by high moral purpose. Constructively they are often weak and vague, and while keenly appreciating the inequalities of society, they look for alteration rather by impressing

certain duties on the well-to-do than by seeking to obliterate class distinctions. Charity is their golden word.

In our own day, Charles Dickens may serve as a good illustration of the best type of the *Humanitarian* reformer. Though instrumental in putting an end to certain defects in our social organism, his greatest strength lay, not in constructive power, but in stirring the apathetic hearts of Victorian middle-class society.

The *Intellectual* reformer is a rarer bird. He is certainly less popular, for he lacks the picturesque appeal of his brother-in-arms. Humanitarian impulse is not the primary incentive with him; he is not in any way prepossessed in favour of kind hearts as against coronets, since, in his experience, kind hearts not infrequently go with remarkably stupid heads, whereas coronets are not necessarily symbols of mental weakness and moral depravity. But he is primarily concerned with the wastage of power that goes on under modern conditions; it offends his sense of proportion, and he resolves to remedy it. Justice is his golden word, and Mr. Sidney Webb his latest incarnation.

This type of reformer excels in constructive work and, despite his tendency to become doctrinaire, no social movement of any permanent

value is possible without his co-operation. The "driving-power" is supplied by the *Humanitarian* reformer; it is for the *Intellectual* reformer to see that it is properly utilised. Neither can really do without the other. Without the second, Reform becomes an undisciplined force; without the first, Reform resolves itself into academic disquisition.

A third type remains: he may be called, for want of a better name, the *Æsthetic* reformer. Like the second reformer, he appeals directly to comparatively few. His audience is naturally one where taste, sensibility, and refinement predominate. Humanitarian impulse has not determined him, and it is not the "bewildering care" so much as the ugliness in life which concerns him.

The first approaches reform along the pathway of Ethics; the second through the channel of Economics; the third through the portico of Art. Beauty is his golden word, and although at first sight he may appear the most visionary, the least practical of the three, he is in reality often more immediately practical than his comrades, for the range of his activities is more easily determined.

But, if less wide in his appeal than the first, and if lacking the political sagacity of the second,

the *Æsthetic* reformer has revealed to our age one matter of increasing urgency: the intimate connection between Art and Life, between Beauty and Virtue, between Joy and Vitality. In William Morris we shall find as good a modern example of the third type as it were possible to have.

Ruskin, of course, was moulded also on these lines, but intellectual analysis played a more considerable part with him than with Morris.

Now at first sight, it must be frankly conceded, one would not desiderate for Morris the reformer's temperament. In craftsmanship and literature alike, he revealed the fastidious artist. A friendly and genial man with the right sort he certainly was, but he was assuredly, as we have seen, not a readily companionable man. Clearly neither humanitarian feeling nor intellectual conviction would by themselves have driven him to interest himself in social reform. What was it that fired his altruistic impulses?

For half his life he was an artist and lived in an artist's world. What took him from this choice, secluded garden into the rough of the hurly-burly? Was it that he loved his Art less than do other artists? On the contrary, he loved his Art with greater fervour than many artists. In fact it was through the intensity of

his devotion to Art that the altruistic impulse was impelled to action.

Yet these two impulses, the creative and the altruistic, are fundamentally opposed to one another; the artist is ever vindicating, the altruist ever effacing, himself. How, then, could artistic enthusiasm have driven him into the reformer's camp?

To apprehend this we have to remember the peculiar quality of Morris's love of Art, which, with all its intensity, was remarkably circumscribed.

Some of his later utterances suggest that he cared for Art only in its social aspects, but it would be truer to say merely that beauty appealed to him the most strongly when it subserved of some social requirement.

In his early days, Morris imagined that he had but to make beautiful things and they would be welcomed. Up to a point he found this was so.

Beyond that point he encountered apathy. He realised that sordid lives and ugly environment kill the sense of beauty; and the only way to make men feel as he did was to change their lives and modify their environment.

Then came this problem: could he best help the cause he had at heart by serving it as an artist only, or by doing work for which he was

not so well fitted by nature, but which had to be done by the reformer who wished to get a griphold of things ?

The course he took will be traced later, more deliberately and in greater detail ; here it is sufficient to say that, true to his character and temperament, as displayed in other directions, he tried to do both. No man can serve both Art and Sociology. Morris died in essaying it.

When Morris was born in 1834, the demos was a rough, uncouth creature, scarcely articulate, tingling with fierce desires, but with only dimly outlined aims. In 1896, when Morris died, the uncouth thing had become an articulate and intelligent force. His youth and manhood saw the rise of the Democracy from impotence into power.

During the early years of his boyhood, the industrial poor were realising bitterly that so far as they were concerned, the legislative travail of 1832 had brought forth only a mouse in the way of reform. Clear-headed working men like the tailor, Francis Place, had expected little, and suffered therefore no disillusionments. He had counselled his comrades to educate themselves, and thus qualify for participation in political life. It was an easier and pleasanter

matter for many to listen to the demagogues of the day, to acclaim the rhetorical claptrap of Hunt, and to persuade themselves that they had only to shout for the walls of Privilege to straightway fall down.

Then came the Chartist movement.

In its earlier phases it is notable for its fervent idealism, and sober methods, and the aim of the London Association (1836) was "to create a moral, reflecting, energetic public opinion, so as eventually to lead to a gradual improvement in the condition of the working classes, without violence or commotion." It was the first definite and distinct attempt on the part of the people to assert their claim to participate in the government of the country, and its influence upon social politics was a remarkable one. Libraries and debating societies were formed, much on the lines earlier desiderated by Francis Place. Political clubs were started, and the articles of the political faith were formulated in the People's Charter, received by democrats all over the country by acclamation. Even Carlyle, who had so many bitter things to say of later democratic developments, declared: "The matter of Chartism is weighty, its deep notes far extending." But the way of reform is steep and thorny, and the

pacific line ill-suited the more fiery temperaments. While William Lovett, sensitive and highly strung, yet cool and reasonable, counselled moral force, the impatient, hot-headed Feargus O'Connor lent his fiery oratory to the cause of physical force. A wiser toleration on the part of the Government, greater tact by the police, might have greatly moderated the turmoil of the early 'forties. But the Government was overbearing, the police undiscriminating, and the harsh, unjust treatment meted out to many of the Chartists roused a fierce flame of resentment, even from those who had disapproved of their militant tactics.

The compelling interest of these democratic expressions is strikingly illustrated in the literature of the age. The singers of the Romantic movement, with the exception of Shelley, stood aloof from the social problems of their day; but the increasing urgency of industrial unrest claimed the generation of writers who succeeded them, both great and small. Carlyle left philosophy and history for the insistent questions of the hour. Tennyson, after daintily flirting with the Muse in his earlier verse, caught some measure of the radical sentiment of the time in *Locksley Hall*. Hood stayed his irresponsible fooling to write *The Song of the*

Shirt and *The Bridge of Sighs*. Elizabeth Barrett Browning gave us *The Cry of the Children*. Even the story-tellers of the age were drawn into the movement. Social reconstruction is written in big letters across the pages of Dickens. Already, while Morris was at Marlborough and Oxford, *The Christmas Carol* and *The Chimes* had spread their kindly and cheery gospel far and wide. The uncertain working of the new Poor Law, the shameful conditions of the Elementary Schools, the horrors of the Debtors' Prison, had been blazoned in the faces of thousands who would never have read a treatise or opened a Blue-book.

Charles Reade had started on his vigorous exposure of social anomalies during Morris's first year at Oxford; and the early work of Charles Kingsley—largely inspired by Carlyle—showed that the Church, too long a laggard in these matters, had at last found a man among them to whom the well-being of the nation was an essential factor to a healthy life.

Carlyle's passionate declamation that it was "a tragedy that one man should die ignorant who has the capacity for knowledge," lies at the root of Kingsley's social teaching.

Morris's moral sympathies were more directly

touched by Ruskin, but Carlyle was undoubtedly the first formative influence in the direction of social amelioration.

Then came the famous chapter on The Nature of Gothic in *The Stones of Venice*, as a secondary and more powerful stimulus. So important a part did this passage play in Morris's after life, it is worth while recalling it, in part.

"In the make and nature of every man, however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labour, there are some powers for better things; some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought, there are, even at the worst; and in most cases it is all our own fault that they are tardy or torpid. But they cannot be strengthened, unless we are content to take them in their feebleness, unless we prize and honour them in their imperfection above the best and most perfect manual skill. And this is what we have to do with all our labourers; to look for the thoughtful part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults and errors we are obliged to take with it. For the best that is in them cannot manifest itself but in company with much error. Understand this clearly: you can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it;

and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms with admirable speed and perfect precision ; and you find his work perfect of its kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops ; his execution becomes hesitating ; he thinks ; and ten to one he thinks wrong ; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before—an animated tool.

" And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanise them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the finger-point, and the soul's force must fill all the invisible nerves that guide it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last—a heap of sawdust so far as its intellectual work

in this world is concerned, saved only by its heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing, and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dulness, all his incapability ; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause upon pause ; but out comes the whole majesty of him also, and we know the height of it only when we see the clouds settling upon him. And, whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them." . . . For individuals " to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognised abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels and weighed with its hammer-strokes —this nature bade not—this God blesses not—this humanity for no long time is able to endure."

Here is the intimate connection formulated between great Art and fine living. Morris, like Ruskin, ultimately entered social politics through the gateway of æstheticism. Art was

his Guardian Angel, and when he realised that her supremacy was threatened and her power stultified, as he did during the years which followed, he turned from a passive sympathiser into an active belligerent.

XIII

ART FOR LIFE'S SAKE

THERE are men to whom physical pain and privation are matters of terrible import. Sometimes, like Carlyle and Dickens, they have known what it is to fight with want and hunger, and the experience has seared their imagination.

Morris was certainly not insensible to the more material side of social reform. He recognised its significance frankly enough, and none more heartily acclaimed the message of Dickens to his generation than he: but it was not the paramount consideration with him. He became a Socialist because in his lifelong tirade against the ugliness of modern life, he felt that unless conditions of labour were changed, his extension of Art into every side of life would be an impossibility. He opposed Capitalism in the same spirit as he opposed aniline dye; not primarily because it made for cruelty, but because it made for ugliness. Morris had as little patience with

the " Art for Art's sake " of the æsthete, as he had for the " Art for Ethics' sake " of the moralist. For him it was " Art for Life's sake."

As time went on, he realised that his ideals of Art, if they were to be actualised, must lead him into conflict with the social realities of the day. At this time he was a prominent figure in the life of London. He had been elected an Honorary Fellow of his College, and had refused the honour of the Chair of Poetry at Oxford.

Socialism to-day is the hall-mark of smart modernity ; in those days it was a synonym for lawlessness and folly. We have to remember that, to appreciate the tremendous sacrifice made by Morris in joining the movement. It put a strain on many a friendship ; a few succumbed ; while even in the strongest of all, that with Burne-Jones, the difference introduced the one note of real discord between these two lifelong friends.

On one occasion Burne-Jones mentioned Morris's name to one of his aristocratic friends in connection with some important decorative work. The noble lord was quite willing for Morris to do the work, but on discovering later that he was a Socialist, he cried off. This shows in what odium a Socialist was held during the 'eighties.

For so famous a man as Morris to identify himself with such a movement meant an inevitable loss of prestige. Yet never did he hesitate for a moment, once convinced that he could benefit the working classes by taking this step. It was the fate of Ruskin over again. People who had acclaimed the author of *Modern Painters*, apostrophised *Unto this Last* as " mischievous drivel." Similarly, those who revered Morris as an Art critic reviled him when he turned to Social criticism. And yet it is perfectly clear that Morris's Social views were logical deductions from his Art theories. " Art," in Morris's opinion, " being a function of life," sound life is impossible except when life is organised under sound conditions. The reviler was to blame, for he had never understood the real drift of Morris's Art gospel. Morris, with his passionate devotion to the spirit of Beauty, had from the start tried to gladden his fellow countrymen by giving them beautiful things : in church, street and homestead. The spiritual no less than the material beneficence of Beauty was so clear to him, that he thought all others must see as he saw. But he had not reckoned with the blindness of the Philistines. He had not realised that to the majority beauty was a meaningless word. Born and bred in squalor

and ugliness, their eyes were holden, and they could not see. There is a saying of Herbert Spencer's which is profoundly true : " There is no alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts." This must have been borne in upon Morris during the 'seventies. What remained to be done ? The instincts must be changed. To paraphrase Mrs. Poyser's well-known saying, the masses must be hatched over again, and hatched different. At one time perhaps he had thought the ugliness of modern life lay more on the surface. The world was waiting to be converted ; give them the beautiful things and all would be well. So he gave them beauty in abundance. Some turned it into a mere pose ; others wished to make it the exclusive delight of a few ; the majority frankly ignored it.

How could he make them feel the need of Beauty ?

By making them realise all that Beauty stood for ; by making them see that Beauty and healthy living are convertible terms ; that Beauty is not an " extra " in the school of life, but an essential.

What social theory would express this the most completely, and satisfying ? A theory which substituted co-operation for competition : that was his conclusion.

How far he was sound in his conclusions is a question outside the perspective of this study. I am not concerned here with upholding or attacking Socialism as a desirable ideal. It is sufficient to indicate the reality and integrity of Morris's views on the subject. Yet, without broaching controversial ground, one may say that whatever particular nostrum we may individually favour for the present sickness of the body politic, the unhealthy condition of that body is beyond question. We may differ about the character of the physician to be called in : that we need *some* physician is obvious to every student of affairs.

Simple and inevitable as the transition was to Morris, it meant, in many ways, a cruel uprooting of many tastes and inclinations, and an appalling amount of uncongenial activities. Economics was not in his line ; public speaking was a revolutionary departure ; the lack of privacy, and obtrusion of uncongenial spirits, a tribulation not easily endured. But with characteristic thoroughness he faced them all.

He may have tackled Marx much as a child tackles a powder ; but he got the powder down. He drilled himself to speak until he became, if not an orator, at any rate a power from the platform ; and he mingled with the motley

crew of the discontented, giving them freely of his material and artistic wealth.

About his grip of his subject there can be no question.

When in the movement, his thoroughness led him to explore every side. He studied Economics with the same thoroughness he had given to tapestry weaving, and one of the ablest thinkers in the movement tells me that Morris's grasp of the subject was complete.

It may be judged in the clear and cogent exposition of *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, written by himself and Mr. Belfort Bax in collaboration. Despite the wealth of Socialistic literature that has since sprung up, the book holds its own, as among the best of its kind.

The Democratic Federation (afterwards the Social Democratic Federation) which Morris joined in 1882, represented the more progressive views of the day. Although not Socialistic in its beginnings it soon became so, and its members, once satisfied with thirsting for the life of the House of Lords, now cried out for the blood of the middle-classes. But the middle-class had a pachydermatous hide. It had proved insensible to the javelin thrusts of Matthew Arnold's mordant satire, and to the polysyllabic

onslaughts of Carlyle, and moved on its way, stubborn and unyielding, despite the guerilla warfare of the disciples of Henry George and the fusillades of Karl Marx and his school. The result of this apathy was to make Morris more aggressive in his attitude. That it concerned him as an artist he made fully clear. "What business have we with Art at all," he asked, "unless all can share it?" He aimed, therefore, at bringing about a state of things where men might live at peace, free from anxiety, and provided with work pleasant to themselves and useful to their neighbours.

In his manifesto *To The Working Men of England* (1877), at the time of the Bulgarian atrocities, we have the first considerable public utterance of Morris of a definitely Socialistic character.

During the next few years his literary work fell into abeyance. Early and late all his best energies were given to the Socialist cause: lectures all over the country; straight talks at street corners; debates in dismal out-of-the-way places, where often the most depressing thing was to face the unresponsiveness of the very folk for whom he was labouring. His very home was turned into a meeting-place and talking-shop. He spared himself nothing;

and, unhappily, he was at the beck and call of every vagrant that called himself a Socialist. Socialists were few in those days, and however undesirable a man might be, if he were a Socialist, Morris would see him and, when possible, help him.

How did he treat his own workmen? That is a question often asked. Certainly it is a pertinent one. There, as in other directions, the honesty and consistency of the man show themselves. No master of labour was kinder or fairer than he. His explosive temper spared the bungler there as little as elsewhere; but if any criticism be made of him it is that he treated the slacker too generously. Of one man who continually drew in advance on his wage-account, an amusing story is told. Morris met him one day in the country, and went up to him with intent to tackle him about his recognised deficiencies. Before he had uttered more than a word or so, the man stopped him with: "Look, Mr. Morris, there's a trout!" pointing to a stream hard by. "Quick, man, quick, get your line," said the angler, triumphing over the master: "don't go and lose the damned thing!" Thus the matter in dispute was forgotten. Needless to say, the trout was as hypothetical as Mrs. Harris herself, but it served

its purpose. Morris forgot to do the reprimanding he had intended.

Much of his fresh activities was work to which he was unaccustomed, and for which in many ways he was unsuited. Yet if he had neither the oratory of Mr. Hyndman nor the quick prehensile wit of Mr. Bernard Shaw, at this time he had a power of personality transcending both. This is what Mr. Hyndman wrote in *Justice* after Morris's death :

" Morris, with his great reputation and high character, doubled our strength at a stroke, by giving in his adhesion. And how he worked ! He was as ready to do anything as the youngest and least known of us. In fact, he resented attempts being made to keep him back from doing things which he really ought not to have done. Writing, speaking in and out of doors, conferring, full of zeal and brimming over with good humour and suggestion—it all seems but yesterday. When *Justice* was started with Edward Carpenter's money—in January, 1884—he threw himself into it with vigour, and wrote frequently. We then thought and said that we should all work on together in harmony to the end. Alas ! that was not to be. Happily, however, the differences which arose in the autumn of 1884 were composed, and for many years past the relations of the S.D.F. and all

its branches with William Morris were as cordial as they ever had been before."

The differences to which Mr. Hyndman alluded were differences of method, differences of temperament also, rather than of principles. The rupture, however, by splitting the Socialists into two branches, undoubtedly weakened for a while their fighting powers.

His success as a public speaker was actually due rather to his earnestness, directness, and weight of personality, than to any special brilliance, either of dialectics or oratory. His first speech was appallingly bad—such is the opinion of an intimate friend.

At the outset he wrote and read all his speeches, which were quite literary in form. Later on, with the constant practice he underwent, he spoke from a few rough notes. These speeches were simple and more direct, and consequently far more effective for the purpose intended. "Anyone can be a public speaker," he would declare to his friend, in his hearty, unassuming way, "if he only peg away sufficiently at it."

He was certainly not spoiled by praise for his initial efforts, and a prominent Socialist in the north of England gives an amusingly unflattering picture of some of his provincial efforts.

On one occasion Morris gave two lectures in a small hall that held about two hundred. About fifty turned up. Someone suggested in the anteroom before the lecture, that the Chairman (who was, unbeknown to Morris, a good vocalist) should sing the *Marseillaise* to rouse up the languid audience. Morris regarded the Chairman benignantly and suggested cheerily that it might be better *not* to do so, as, unless it was really *well* done, it would not be worth while. The lecture certainly did not prove rousing; and two local worthies who had consented somewhat unwillingly to grace the assembly soon went comfortably to sleep in the front row.

After the lecture, Morris turned to one of the ladies who had been present, and asked how she liked his lecture: "Not at all!" was the unexpected reply. "But I thought the colour of your blue shirt charming."

Morris roared with laughter at the criticism, and at once gleefully embarked on an interesting story of the trouble he had taken to find the right dye.

At another time, during a lecture in 1890, on Gothic Architecture, at the Artists' Club, in Liverpool, he referred to the Mersey Tunnel as a "foul-odoured sewer" and heaped scorn on St. George's Hall. In lecturing at this time he used

manuscript, which he held in the left hand, while he mopped himself with a big silk bandanna in the right; one leg being planted firmly in front of the other. After a while he would reverse the manuscript and bandanna, and change the leg also. This change went on at regular intervals throughout the lecture.

But if the lectures were somewhat formal, the after discussions were invariably lively. Some youth disputed something Morris had said about the Middle Ages. Morris waxed furious. "Young man," he shouted, "remember that in talking about mediæval times, *I am on my own dunghill!*"

Someone asked for a definition of robbery (a word he had used often and pointedly). Morris immediately rapped out: "The attempt to live without producing!"

Some have held that his *Dream of John Ball*, and *News from Nowhere*, did more for the cause he had at heart than all his speeches and lectures. That the Romances appealed to a wider audience cannot be gainsaid; but much as one may regret the dreadful strain made by the "hole and corner" work, one must not underrate the value and significance of his direct propagandist labours.

It can be argued plausibly, that without

abstaining altogether from lectures and debating activities, he might have put the bulk of his strength into purely artistic work for helping on the cause; inasmuch as for the hundreds who could speak and debate as well as he, there were so few that could write as he could. I know of only one drawback to this contention, and that drawback is Morris's personality. He could never give a little of himself to anything. In whatever he undertook he emptied himself entirely. To have become a Socialist propagandist and stump orator may have been the folly of a great artist or the wisdom of a great-hearted man; that depends on the point of view. But it was Morris all over. Nor could he have acted otherwise. The wonder is, not that these final activities killed him, but that any of his previous labours had not done so. Never in his whole life did he take up anything, from a boyish freak to a new craft or a new gospel, but with the furious zeal of one whose very life depended upon its accomplishment.

The Socialist movement benefited to a remarkable degree by the active labour of Morris during these years. His influence as a Socialist would never have carried that weight and authority which undoubtedly attached to it had he been merely content with fashioning literary Utopias.

The reception of *John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* was assuredly influenced by the knowledge that the writer had sacrificed largely his own reputation as an artist and public man, by throwing himself so unselfishly and wholeheartedly into the weary and too often ungrateful work of street-corner proselytising.

Nor, to be fair, was the gain all on one side. The wider intercourse, the growth of many and diverse minds, engendered by his work, mellowed the man, rounded off some of the sharp angles in his personality, and held in check that occasional intolerance and dogmatic exclusiveness of his earlier years.

Yet, accustomed as he was to win success in all the ventures he had undertaken, the small headway made against the forces of apathy and reaction, dispirited and wearied him.

A crisis in his career as a Socialist took place at the famous Trafalgar Square Riots of November, 1888, described so vividly by his biographer. The outcome of the conflict on that occasion between the Socialist mob and the police, showed even to Morris the impotence born of lack of organisation. He realised the unfitness of the working classes for any revolutionary movement. Their total unpreparedness

came upon him as a shock despite his long association with them ; and with the knowledge came also the realisation that his efforts for the future must be directed along more peaceful and more humdrum lines. The work must be largely Educational, not Revolutionary. The " day of the Lord " could not be dated as some optimistic souls had hoped. That being so, Morris felt increasingly that it would be better for him to return to his literary work. He could best help on the cause in that way. Failing the millennium in the 'nineties there should at least be a dream picture of the promised land. So he gave us *News from Nowhere*, and followed it up by those remarkable prose romances, that, quite apart from their literary value, interest us as reflecting the impassioned imagination of Morris, sick of the tardy progress of reform, and determined to refresh his own soul by the might-bes and peradventures of Romance.

His patience and tolerance as a speaker, argued magnificent self-control in a man of Morris's temperament. The violent criticisms of other Socialists never disturbed him, as it would have done a more self-centred man. At one of the West London meetings, a well-known anarchist got up and accused him of talking

" damned nonsense ! " Morris did not comment ; he went on with his speech, and at the close, when those around him on the platform fully expected he would turn and rend the interrupter, he went up to him, took his arm, and invited him back to supper and a chat. He knew the man was a genuine man behind all his violence. He was willing to talk the matter out as man to man, and this individual became one of his greatest admirers. He knew how few would have treated him as Morris did. Morris's friends never lost their self-respect. They knew they could be outspoken, and that it was not necessary, as it is with some, to be sycophantic or self-effacing to retain his consideration.

It was inevitable that Morris, continually in contact during the later years with the revolutionary forces of the day, should not escape from the wastrels and derelicts who accompany every pioneer movement, and bring discredit often on the finer souls.

Morris was a rich man and a man of great influence ; and, availing themselves of Morris's broad human sympathies and material affluence, they surged ravenously round him. Mr. Cunninghame Graham must have been thinking of these when, in a striking phrase, he described Morris to the present writer as reminding him

often of "a bull bison surrounded by a pack of wolves."

Certainly he was no Brother Cheeryble—unconscious that he was being imposed on. He knew a rogue when he saw one, just as he knew an honest man. Yet his tolerance and generosity were such that he could not deny them. Fate had made them what they were; they were wretched; that was sufficient. "Why did you help that man?" remonstrated a friend; "he'll be always sponging on you." "I know that," responded Morris quietly, "but he's such a poor devil, I had to do something!"

He could never be hard; rarely, indeed, could he be firm with nuisances. One day, at a S.P.A.B. committee meeting, a street piano organ started jangling loudly outside. Morris, having expressed himself appropriately, offered to go down and stop it. When he returned the music had ceased. "I got rid of him," said Morris, with a look of triumph. A friend who knew him well, said: "I say, Morris, what did you give him?" He was aware of Morris's methods of getting rid of people. "Half a crown," was the rejoinder, "and told him not to come again." It is scarcely necessary to say that the itinerant musician became the more confirmed in his habit of "serenely" grinding

melodies on subsequent Thursdays, until a more efficacious messenger than Morris put an end to his visits.

Although never approving of the Fabian policy of permeation, he was persuaded at this time that the work in the near future must be largely educational. We can at least do this, he would say: "Let every Socialist make a Socialist."

It has been suggested by some of his critics that Morris weakened in his Socialistic faith during later years, and that his abstinence from active propaganda after the Trafalgar Square affair was due partly to his chagrin at the failure of that protest, and partly to disgust with the continued apathy of many of those for whose sake he was labouring. This is entirely untrue. That he was disappointed, we have seen; but the more passive attitude he took during the last year or so of his life was entirely determined by questions of health. The arduous character of his lecturing campaign had broken him down. At one time he had lectured practically every day of the week, and this over a period not merely of months but years. Never a very strong man, despite his prodigious vitality, the work had undermined his constitution. Nor was it the labour so much as

the unhygienic conditions under which he did the labour that caused the mischief. Literary work, and fresh experiments in craftsmanship, as, for instance, the Kelmscott printing, did not put the same strain upon him. That is the only reason why he gave up the more active propagandist side of Socialism. But in spirit and intent he remained absolutely the same—a whole-hearted Socialist, ready to subordinate every other interest to the cause. This did not prevent him differing often from the tactics of other Socialists, some of whom jarred on Morris through their lack of imagination and self-centred intolerance. "Never mind," he would say, "Socialism will come to pass, in spite of the Socialists."

Pioneers are not easy folk to get along with at any time. The very qualities that make them good fighters make them also indifferent relations.

Reactionaries hang together. They are satisfied with the *statu quo*. All agree with fine unanimity to go forward; but the rate of walking is a matter of considerable and chronic controversy.

The Social Democratic Federation, which merged finally into the Socialistic League was, as we have seen, in its inception a Radical body.

The Liberalism of the day Morris had found too weak-kneed and indetermined. So he had left it behind. But he never belonged to the type of Socialist who looks upon Liberalism and Toryism as equally pernicious. It is worth noting that he invariably voted with the Progressives at the London County Council, School Board, and Parliamentary elections. True, the Liberal did not go far enough for him, but he was facing, in his opinion, the right direction, and consequently to be supported rather than the Tory.[1] Morris is spoken of sometimes as if he had been a kind of Utopian visionary who would accept nothing short of the millennium. Here again the dreamer and the man of action were both to the fore. The dreamer sighed for an ideal community, where both Liberal and Tory would cease from troubling; but the practical man voted for the party that, if not commanding his heart and mind, seemed at any rate the least mischievous. So, while cursing the Liberal, he pushed him forward, hoping perhaps that one day he might see the error of his ways and save his soul alive.

In the early days of English Socialism, Anarchism played a considerable part, and Morris numbered many well-known anarchists—

[1] I am indebted to Mr. Emery Walker for this view.

Prince Kropotkin, for instance—among his friends. His own attitude towards Anarchism, however, was clearly defined enough, as may be gathered from the following letter, to one of their number :

"KELMSCOTT HOUSE,
"UPPER MALL, HAMMERSMITH.
"*December 12th*, 1893.

"MY DEAR TOCHATTI,

"I do not remember having promised to contribute to your paper, though I do remember promising to write a pamphlet for you. In any case, however, considering the attitude which some anarchists are taking up about the recent anarchist murders and attempts to murder, I could not in conscience allow anything with my name attached to it to appear in an anarchist paper (as I understand yours is to be), unless you publish in said paper a distinct repudiation of such monstrosities.

"Here I might make an end, but since we have been in friendly association, I will ask you if you do not think you ought, for your own sake, as (I should hope) a person holding views which may be reasonably argued about, to repudiate the use of means which can bring with them nothing but disaster to the cause of liberty—for your own sake and for those who honestly think that the principles of

anarchy are right. For I cannot for the life of me see how such principles, which propose the abolition of compulsion, can admit of promiscuous slaughter as a means of converting people.

"However, I don't for a moment suppose that you agree with such 'propaganda by deed'——

"But since I don't think so, that is the very reason why I think you should openly say that you do not.

"Yours very sincerely,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

His comrade Tochatti, the outspoken editor of *Liberty* in the early 'nineties, fully concurred with the sentiments expressed in this letter: consequently, Morris contributed several times to the columns of his paper.

Anarchism, however, like all negative terms, can be made to shelter every shade of revolutionary, just as Chartism covered the physical-force militants, and the moral-force idealists; and with the more violent type of anarchist Morris had no intellectual sympathy whatever; though I fancy he had a soft place in his heart for every kind of revolutionary. What he did admire in many of these anarchists was the intellectual courage, the fierce independence,

the utter absence of the opportunistic spirit, which so disheartened him with current politics and the average politician.

Outspokenness and independence attracted him at once. It was the remarkable maiden speech of Mr. Cunninghame Graham in the House of Commons that first drew him towards the speaker. He recognised at once a man of rare courage, combined with an eloquence and intellectual power seldom found in the arena of modern politics.

Here it may be well to point out how divergent was Morris's social ideal from that pictured by Bellamy in his *Looking Backward*—an ideal termed by Morris "a Cockney Paradise." Socialism for him meant a communistic society with its implication of voluntary co-operation for common ends. Yet here again, as always, he was no mere visionary. He had no belief in Catastrophic Communism; he did not imagine that we could go asleep "on a Saturday in a Capitalistic Society and wake on Monday in a Communistic Society." He repudiated the idea of open war as a means towards the end desired. The change would, he knew, be a gradual one; and the best means of bringing it about was constant education, and the continual making of Socialists. A transitional

period between the present Capitalistic system and that of Communism he knew to be inevitable.

What did he hope from his Commune? This: that men would thus be free from artificial disabilities, and then each man's abilities would be developed for the benefit of all. "Abolition of Waste by taking care that one man does not get more than he can use, and another less than he needs; consequent condition of general well-being and fullness of life, neither idle and vacant, nor overburdened with toil."

The rationale of his Socialism may be gleaned from his essays, especially from his pamphlet on Communism; while the poetry of Socialism is implied in the *Dream of John Ball*. "This small book," wrote Mr. Holbrook Jackson, in his brilliant little study of Morris,[1] "is the great parable of English Socialism, and it is the religion behind the richly-coloured dream of William Morris."

"Democracy said and says,"[2] he wrote, "men shall not be the masters of others because hereditary privilege has made a race or a family

[1] *William Morris: Socialist-Craftsman*, by Holbrook Jackson (A. C. Fifield).

[2] *Signs of Change*.

or so, and they happen to belong to such race ; they shall individually grow into being the master of others by the development of certain qualities under a system of another which artificially protects the wealth of every man, if he has acquired it in accordance with this artificial system, from the interference of every other, and from all others combined. The new order of things says, on the contrary, Why have masters at all ? Let us be fellows working in the harmony of association for the common good, that is for the greatest happiness and completest development of every human being in the community."

It is here that we come upon that significant divergence from Ruskin's Socialism hinted at in the last chapter, which lies implicitly in their respective attitudes towards mediævalism. Ruskin's affection and admiration for the Middle Ages was whole-hearted. Not merely the Art and position of the craftsman, but the feudal framework also, compelled his admiration. His own scheme of a regenerated society was an aristocratic Socialism—a new feudalism, with a feudal chief and a country nobility.

Morris, on the other hand, had no liking for feudalism as a political theory, caring for the Middle Ages as the age of popular Art, when the

craftsman took a pride and joy in his work, and ignoring completely the political aspects. Consequently, his was a Democratic, not an Aristocratic Socialism. In order to realise the real significance of this distinction, let us examine Ruskin's social philosophy more closely.

There was a strain of old-world Toryism in Ruskin's nature which coloured all his schemes of social reconstruction. No man of our time—Morris himself not excepted—had a livelier appreciation of the inequalities of life, or a clearer insight into the cause of these inequalities. His criticism of the Competitive System is unequalled for its searching analysis and brilliant satire; and his enthusiastic support of publicly organised industry in its stead, and the wealth of his constructive suggestions, on most economic points, must of course be freely admitted. But he shared with Carlyle a profound belief in the "Great Man" theory: the Great Man was to be "the boss," with a Church and Bureaucracy to assist. The dominant note in Carlyle's Social message is *Authority* and *Obedience*.

On the other hand, the dominant note in Morris's message is *liberty* and *equality*. Ruskin's

instincts were against trusting the people to manage their own affairs. Morris found the modern exponents of Liberalism too weak-kneed, and passed them by. But he started on the Liberal platform ; and it was not because he disliked Liberalism but because he was impatient of Liberals that he left them.

For Ruskin, on the other hand, Liberalism was always anathema. He called himself an *Illiberal,* denounced Liberalism as tending towards anarchy, and pointed to the stock example of Liberal principles—America !

" Mazzini," says Mr. Hobson, in a clear and cogent passage, " has laid his finger upon the very same defects in the old revolutionary formulæ which Mr. Ruskin has noted ; but, instead of formally renouncing liberty and equality, he strove more wisely to impart a fuller and more positive content to the former, and to lay a moral basis of brotherhood for the latter. Both saw that economic injustice was the soil from which sprung the vices of political systems ; both diagnosed that injustice in the same way, though Mr. Ruskin far more completely and acutely. But while Mazzini concluded that the needed reform was that the people should control their economic as well as their political government, and must fit

themselves for doing so, Mr. Ruskin always denied the possibility of popular government either in politics or industry."

This is finely true of Mazzini, and might be applied word for word to Morris.

There is one criticism of Morris's social philosophy, which is often made, and merits attention; especially as so able a critic as Mr. Hobson has given it the weight of his authority. Let me quote from Mr. Hobson again: [1]

"Taking *News from Nowhere* as at once the fullest and most concrete expression of Morris's social reform teaching, we find it resolved into a single precept, 'Do as you like.' A society in which every one at once does what he likes, and likes what he does, is the ideal that is presented. All sense of pain and irksomeness is brushed away from labour; duty—either towards oneself, one's neighbours, or society—nowhere presents itself as a necessary motive. The artist even now likes what he does; therefore, place all work on the footing of an art, the necessary work will all be done for its own sake and for the sake of the pleasure got from doing it. Now Mr. Ruskin is at once more definitely moral and more practical. He perceives that much work is not inherently and immediately

[1] *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, by J. A. Hobson (Nisbet): a fine and notable study.

desirable ; that most of the finest art-work is based upon toil and monotony of preparation ; that neither a sense of duty nor social compulsion can be utterly dispensed with as motives to labour, and that the sense of moral obligation, and the painful endurance it often imposes, are not antagonistic to industrial and social good, though the promptings of passing self-interest are opposed to them ; but that, on the contrary, this duty and this toil are important factors in the building up of character in men and nations. Mr. Ruskin goes far with Morris, insisting that as much work as possible should be made good and interesting, and that all should share such work ; but he neither sees the feasibility nor admits the desirability of abolishing work from those qualities of self-sacrifice which imply the subordination of the present interests of a narrow self to the longer interests of the larger social self."

I do not think this summary is quite fair to Morris, though if *News from Nowhere* be taken as the fullest expression of Morris's Socialistic views, the deduction is not an unreasonable one. But we must allow latitude to the romancer ; and forgive fantastic embellishments and even absurdities in a tale of this kind, which we should not pass over in an essay.

Is it not fairer to consider the essays and

lectures of Morris as the clearest and most serious expression of his social gospel? If we do this, Mr. Hobson's criticism seems no longer pertinent.

It is quite true that Morris is always emphasising the desirability of the attractiveness of labour, but it is not true that "duty either towards oneself, one's neighbour, or society, nowhere presents itself as a necessary motive."

Take Morris's essay, *Useful Work versus Useless Toil.* He argues here that Labour that is not in itself attractive may be made attractive if we look to the interests of the community at large. To make labour attractive he says: "No very heavy sacrifice will be required . . . but some *will* be required. . . . We must begin to build up the ornamental part of life—its pleasures, bodily and mental, scientific and artistic, social and individual—on the basis of work undertaken willingly and cheerfully, *with the consciousness of benefiting ourselves and our neighbour by it.*"[1]

Finally, he concludes:

"I claim that work in a duly ordered community should be made attractive by the consciousness of usefulness, by its being carried

[1] The italics are mine.

on with intelligent interest and variety, and by its being exercised amidst pleasurable surroundings."

What he does claim, however, is that labour need not, as it is at present, be "generally repulsive."

But the value of Morris as a social force lies in the *whole* effect of his work, and must not be viewed as merely due to the few years he gave to Socialism, or to the economic theory with which he identified himself.

Perhaps the most valuable and distinctive part lies in the social use he made of his gift of beauty. He is less the artist than the artist citizen. The artist pure and simple loves beauty for itself, without any ulterior view. Whether a thing be useful he cares not, so long as it be beautiful. Not so Morris: beauty divorced from utility did not appeal to him. He was indifferent about the bric-à-brac over which Rossetti raved; pictures only appealed to him as part of a scheme of mural decoration; and it is significant that the most social of all the Arts—Architecture, was for him the Art pre-eminent and triumphant. In this he differed from Keats and Rossetti, and derives from Ruskin. Æstheticism to him was an ethic, a fervent creed for the betterment of the people.

And deaf as many may have been to its monitions it has certainly profoundly affected many sides of English life. The effect on the decoration of middle-class homes we have seen. Again and again the line in the old Circular has been justified—that *beauty is not a question of costliness, but of taste.*

Unhappily, the whole trend of modern civilisation has been to suppress this instinct for what is fair and gracious ; to dull the fancy and stifle the imagination.

Many of the Socialistic and Labour leaders were men of earnest purpose, and humanitarian zeal, some of high intellectual power. But the movement lacked sadly the vision of the poet. So the advent of the Artist-Socialist meant the introduction of a force of rich imaginative content. Perhaps Morris's own poetry or romances never appealed to more than a handful ; it would have been surprising had it been otherwise. But by appealing to the instinct for beauty, he indirectly helped to rouse a real and vital appreciation of the treasures of English literature. He was by no means the first to do this ; two of his early contemporaries, Charles Kingsley and Frederick William Robertson, had done a fine work in this direction. Robertson's social influence had been confined largely to

Brighton, but, limited as it may have been, his *Lectures to Working Men on the Influence of Poetry* are remarkable for lucidity and persuasive charm.

Much of the advanced Radicalism of the day was not merely anti-theological, but anti-religious. That this should be is not surprising, considering how dilatory religious organisations had shown themselves in matters affecting the interests of the people at large, and how narrow and uncharitable was the piety of the day. So the advent of a great artist like Morris did much to mellow the Socialist movement.

It is quite true that Morris owed much to Ruskin. On the other hand, Ruskin's message gained greatly in driving power through the interpretation of Morris's simple and more downright personality. Intellectually speaking, Ruskin is the more considerable influence; in his analytical criticism of contemporary economics, he has achieved something quite outside the power of Morris. But the theological bias, the arbitrary whimsicalities of Ruskin, the contradictory angles of his brilliant and diverse nature, proved a stumbling-block to many. Morris here did as valuable a work as Darwin's "bull-dog" Huxley achieved for Darwin, in interpreting and popularising his

master. Yet, in both cases, we have to be careful to give the disciple his due. Both Morris and Huxley have suffered undervaluation by virtue of their popularising powers; for both were much more than interpreters of another man's ideas. They were the best of all disciples, men whose integrating personalities gave greater weight and amplitude to the ideas for which they stood sponsor.

XIV

MORRIS, CARLYLE, AND DICKENS

WITHOUT in any way under-rating the considerable reforming influence wielded by Ruskin and Morris, no social critic can afford to forget the magnificent pioneer work done by two men of even greater genius—Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens. Carlyle's more provocative and often reactionary note makes his dubious position to-day (I do not mean his literary position) more intelligible. Yet Carlyle, for all his contradictoriness, and Dickens, despite his occasional short-sighted sentimentalism, wielded a force in social politics not merely of supreme importance, but without which Ruskin and Morris would have striven in vain.

The case of Carlyle is somewhat curious, for he has drawn down both curses and blessings from the modern reformer. Radical, in the old Benthamite sense of the word, during his earlier years, he became more and more reactionary

as the years went by; and although never faltering in his sympathy with the struggling worker, he had little of Mazzini's splendid belief in the capacity of the people for self-government. His defence of Slavery, his perpetual lauding of the "Great Man" (whom he sometimes confused with the blustering man), his disbelief in Liberty, his identification of Might with Right; all these points in Carlyle's social teaching, are reactionary. Despite these grave limitations to Carlyle's social teaching, due largely to infirmities of temperament, he was extraordinarily clear-sighted in certain directions. His attack on the idle rich produced a definite and profound impression upon our aristocracy. His suggestions for the organisation of Labour, his insistence that Justice, not Charity, should be the dominating motive in civilised society, his attack upon the mechanisation of Industrial employment, started a line of attack of which full advantage was taken by both Ruskin and Morris. To Carlyle, moreover, we are indebted for such familiar phrases as "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work" and "permanence of employment"; and he anticipated Morris in drawing attention to the finer elements of mediæval Industrial life.

By the tingling and fierce intensity of his

writing, he compelled attention to the complex problems of Industrial conditions.

If inferior to Mazzini in penetrating insight, at any rate he shares with him that constant vital sympathy with "the under dog;" and in stirring his apathetic countrymen from their comfortable belief in a commercial paradise, of which the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the outward and visible sign, he did a work hard to over-rate.

The position of Dickens, Carlyle's "honest man," stands on a similar footing, different as he was in many ways, both in temperament and genius.

Like Carlyle, he is rather a great social force than a great social reformer; like Carlyle, moreover, it was by virtue of his moral fervour and imaginative brilliance that he influenced most strongly his generation. As a story-teller, with unparalleled gifts of humorous invention, he exerted a power, wider than Carlyle's in extent, if not so penetrating in its intensity.

Looking more specifically at the work of social uplifting done by Dickens, certain admissions may be made at the outset. His Radicalism had both the merits and defects of the old individualistic regime (though perhaps we see the demerits more clearly than the merits

to-day), and his sovereign remedy for social distress was too often and too literally, a sovereign. His worst enemy would never suggest that he held the "poor in a loomp is bad"; he ran far more risk of exaggerating their moral graces, but he certainly seemed to hold that the poor were incapable of looking after themselves. With these few reserves it may be said that Charles Dickens did more to bring home to the average man and average woman the sufferings of the poor, the miseries of helpless childhood, the pitifulness of the mentally deficient, and the horrors of class tyranny, than any other writer of his time. Many a social anomaly which is now merely a point of historical interest owed, if not its destruction, at any rate its undermining, to the overwhelming ridicule that he poured upon it. There were sides, obviously, which he did not touch: the wastage of intellectual power his contemporary, Charles Kingsley, saw with clearer discernment; the wastage of Art capacity it was the privilege of Ruskin and Morris to make known. But the moral claims of the flotsam and jetsam of humanity never had a nobler or more convincing partisan, and it would be hard to over-estimate the inspiring influence of his Christmas books and stories. They are, to

borrow Thackeray's phrase, " national benefits," often crude and unequal maybe, judged as mere literary performances, yet triumphing by virtue of their passionate humanity.

Take, for instance, this passage from *The Chimes :*

Sir Joseph is speaking—the rich man to the poor.

" ' Your only business, my good fellow . . . in life is with me. You needn't trouble yourself to think about anything. I will think for you ; I know what is good for you. I am your perpetual parent. Such is the dispensation of an all-wise Providence ! Now, the design of your creation is—not that you should swill and guzzle, and associate your enjoyments, brutally, with food . . . but that you should feel the Dignity of Labour. Go forth erect into the cheerful morning air, and—and stop there. Live hard and temperately, be respectful, exercise your self-denial, bring up your family on next to nothing, pay your rent as regularly as the clock strikes, be punctual in your dealing . . . and you may trust me to be your Friend and Father.' "

" ' Gentlefolks,' says one—Will Fern :—' Look at me ! . . . Just come from jail. . . . And neither for the first time, nor the second,

nor the third, nor yet the fourth. . . . Look at me! . . . beyond your help; for the time when your kind words or kind actions could have done me good . . . is gone, with the scent of last year's beans or clover on the air. . . . Hear the real Truth spoke out for once! . . . I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heerd say; but there ain't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that than for a place to live in. Well, I lived there. How hard—how bitter hard—I lived there, I won't say. Any day in the year, and every day, you can judge for your own selves. . . . 'Tis harder than you think for, gentlefolks, to grow up decent, commonly decent, in such a place. That I growed up a man and not a brute says something for me—as I was, then. As I am now, there's nothing can be said for me or done for me. I'm past it . . . Now, gentlemen—you gentlemen that sits at Sessions—when you see a man with discontent writ on his face, you says to one another, "He's suspicious. I has my doubts," says you, "about Will Fern. Watch that fellow!" I don't say, gentlemen, it ain't quite nat'ral, but I say 'tis so; and from that hour,

whatever Will Fern does or lets alone—all one—it goes against him. . . . Now, gentlemen, see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us when we're brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. To jail with him! I comes back here. I goes a-nutting in your woods, and breaks—who don't?—a limber branch or two. To jail with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch of garden, with a gun. To jail with him! I has a nat'ral angry word with that man, when I'm free again. To jail with him! I cuts a stick. To jail with him! I eats a rotten apple or a turnip. To jail with him! It's twenty mile away; and coming back I begs a trifle on the road. To jail with him! At last, the constable, the keeper—anybody—finds me anywhere, a-doing anything. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant and a jail-bird known; and jail's the only home he's got. . . . Do I say this to serve my cause? . . . Who can give me back my liberty; who can give me back my good name . . . ? Not all the lords and ladies in wide England. But, gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with other men like me, begin at the right end. Give us, in mercy, better homes when we're a-lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a-working for our

lives ; give us kinder laws to bring us back when we're a-going wrong ; and don't set Jail, Jail, Jail, before us, everywhere we turn.' "

Highly coloured it may be—strong colours were needed to attract attention—but can any reasonable human being deny its essential truth ?

The fighting note in Carlyle and Dickens is obvious in every line they wrote, in form and substance. But Art laid restraining hands upon Morris with surprising results.

To some this is a disappointment. They miss the buoyant fervour of Dickens, the tempestuous energy of Carlyle, the eloquent irony of Ruskin. But to every man his own method ; and to Morris, with his impatient, hot-headed nature, the cool, restraining hands of Art came as a great relief.

There is little external resemblance between the tumultuous comedies and tragedies of Dickens's mean streets and the elaborately wrought romances and dreamy romanticism of Morris. *Jingle* and *Jason ; The Cricket on the Hearth* and *The Wood beyond the World ; Joe Gargery* and *Sigurd !* The juxtaposition may bring a smile to the face, but it need not do so. For look below the surface and we realise this. Both men were animated by a similar spirit ;

each man had the same object in view. The objectionable thing may be called a dragon or an alderman, according to the taste of the writer ; the power on the side of the angels may be a Sigurd or a Joe Gargery. Happiness may be symbolised by the chirping of the cricket or by the music of the water of the Wondrous Isles.

Yet a common bond unites all these men —Dickens, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris. They differed in much, but, like great mountains lying apart in their base, they converge high up in the air ; and what each held dear in his inmost heart is found condensed in the pregnant words of John Ball :

" Fellowship is Heaven ; lack of Fellowship is Hell."

With this stirring trumpet call may we leave William Morris : a great-hearted, simple, lovable and fiery soul and a Master Craftsman who carried his sureness of vision for strength and beauty into the infinite plastic possibilities of human life.

ANALYTICAL BIOGRAPHY AND SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS CONTEMPORARY WITH MORRIS' CAREER

ANALYTICAL BIOGRAPHY

AND

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS CONTEMPORARY WITH MORRIS' CAREER

STOCK :

Father.—William Morris, born at Worcester, 1797. To London in 1820, became a clerk to Messrs. Harris, Sanderson and Harris, bill and discount brokers of Lombard Street; eventually a partner, and in affluent circumstances.

Died 1847–age 50.

CYMRIC CELT. *Ap Morris.* Grandfather, the first member of the family to drop the Welsh prefix.

Mother.—Emma, youngest daughter of Joseph Shelton, teacher of music.

Died 1894–age 90.

ENGLISH. Ancestors trace back to the Sixteenth Century.

William Morris married Miss Jane Burden, elder daughter of Robert Burden, of Holywell Street, Oxford—April 26, 1859.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1834. *March 24th.*	
William Morris born at Elm House, Walthamstow.	New Poor Law, 1834.
	Hanging in chains abolished 1834.
	The word "*Socialism*" first used during the agitation of Robert Owen, 1835.
	Municipal Reform Bill passed 1835.
	An enquiry on "Combination of Workmen."
	Chartist rising in Newport, 1839.
	British and Foreign Anti-Slavery League founded 1839.
	Activity in Railway organization, 1834-50.
1840–8.	
Woodford Hall, Epping Forest, a small boy dressed in toy armour often seen riding a Shetland pony.	Penny Post established 1840.
	Capital Punishment reserved for Murder and High Treason, 1841.
	Arms granted to the Morris family by Herald's College.
1843–7.	
School at Walthamstow.	First public telegraph in England (Paddington to Slough), 1844.
	Gaol Acts, 1844.
	Repeal of the Corn Duties, 1846.
	Ten Hours Bill, 1847.
	J. H. Newman's secession from the Church of England, 1845.
1848–50.	
Water House, Walthamstow.	Great Chartist Demonstration in London, 1848.

Literature and Art	Comments
Sketches by Boz, 1836. *Pickwick Papers*, 1836-7. *Oliver Twist*, 1837-8. *Nicholas Nickleby*, 1838-9 by Dickens.*	Rise of the Democratic Movement in Social Life and Literature.
Sartor Resartus, 1838. *Chartism* 1839-40, by Carlyle.*	*Dickens and Carlyle among formative influences of Morris's earlier life.
Nature (1836), by Emerson.	
Twice Told Tales, (1837-40), by Hawthorne.	
Organization of Labour, 1840, by Louis Blanc.	
Sordello 1840. *Pippa Passes* 1841. *Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842, by Browning.†	†Morris had a high opinion of Browning's early poems, though indifferent to his later works.
Old Curiosity Shop, 1840, by Dickens.	
Tracts for the Times, 1841.	
Modern Painters (Vol. 1), by Ruskin, 1843.	
The Christmas Carol 1843. *Martin Chuzzlewit* 1843-4, by Dickens.	
Past and Present, 1843. *Cromwell*, 1843, by Carlyle.	Tentative Reform movements at home and Revolutions abroad.
Principles of Political Economy, 1848, by J. S. Mill.	Dickens and Carlyle at height of their fame.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
	Revolutions on the Continent, 1848.
	Death of William Wordsworth.
	Tennyson appointed Poet Laureate, 1850.
1851–6.	
At Marlborough College: "a thick-set, strong-looking boy, with a high colour, good-natured, and kind, but with a fearful temper."	Formation of Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1851.
Not interested in games, but in archæology, old church music, and mediæval architecture.	Establishment of Co-operative Workshops, 1851.
	The Great Exhibition, 1851.
	First Submarine Cable, 1851.
	Christian Socialist Activity.
Thinks of taking Orders in the Church of England.	H. E. Manning (afterwards Cardinal) secedes from the Church of England, 1851.
	The Sculptor, Thomas Woolner, one of the first members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, joins in the rush to Australia for Gold, 1852.
1852.	
Matriculation Examination, Oxford.	Great Strike in the Engineering Trade.
First meeting with Edward Burne-Jones, in the Examination Hall.	Presentation of "The Document" by employers, requiring workmen to disclaim all connection with Trade Unionism.
	Industrial and Provident Societies Act.
	First Free Library.

Literature and Art	Comments
Alton Locke 1848. *Yeast* 1850, by C. Kingsley.	
David Copperfield 1849-50, by Dickens.	
Seven Lamps of Architecture, 1849, by Ruskin.	Ruskin's period as Art Critic.
The Scarlet Letter (1850), by Hawthorne.	
The Biglow Papers (1848-1867), by Lowell.	
The Germ, edited by W. M. Rossetti, 1850.	
Beginnings of the Pre-Raphaelite School.	
Life of John Sterling, 1851, by Carlyle.	
Stones of Venice,* 1851-3. *Pamphlet in defence of the Pre-Raphaelite School*, 1851, by Ruskin.	*Morris deeply impressed by the chapter, "*On the Nature* of *Gothic*."
Lavengro, 1851, by Borrow.	
Songs of Labour, 1851, by Whittier.	
G Eliot, as Assistant Editor of the *Westminster Review*, 1851-53.	
The Golden Legend, (1851), by Longfellow.	
Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington, by Tennyson.	
Villette, by C. Brontë.	
Uncle Tom's Cabin, by H. B. Stowe.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1853–6.	
Exeter College, Oxford.	The influence of John Henry Newman and his Community at Littlemore still lingers in Oxford.
Disappointed with college life—(cf. Ruskin's tirade in *Præterita*).	
First meeting with Ruskin.	
During the long Vacation of 1853, visits churches throughout England.	
A High Churchman at this time.	
1854.	
Attains his majority, and an income of £900 a year.	*Beginnings of Christian Socialism*
A thought at this time of founding a monastery with his fortune, which later on was abandoned.	Working Men's College founded by F. D. Maurice.
Weekly meetings for reading Shakespeare. Morris excelled in reading aloud, and impressed his hearers by his readings of Shakespeare, Ruskin's *Seven Lamps, Modern Painters*, and *The Stones of Venice.*	Borough and County Franchise Bill passed.
First tour abroad†—Belgium, Northern France, and Paris.	Crimean War.
	Cholera Epidemic.
	John Henry Newman appointed Rector of the new Catholic University at Dublin.
1855.	
Attends Maclaren's Gymnasium in Oriel Lane—Morris' preference for single-stick.	Exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite pictures at Clarendon Press.
First Acquaintance with Chaucer,§ and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur.*	An endeavour to bring in a Bill to establish schools out of the rates.
Second tour abroad—Normandy. During this tour Morris and Burne-Jones give up the idea of taking Orders.	Newspaper Stamp Duty abolished.
Visits Cambridge—and reads Tennyson's early poems for the first time.	Death of Charlotte Brontë.

Literature and Art	Comments
Poems, including *Sohrab and Rustum* and *The Scholar Gipsy* 1853, by M. Arnold.	
Hypatia, 1853, by C. Kingsley.	
Peg Woffington, 1852. *Christie Johnston*, 1853, by Reade.	
**The Newcomes*, 1853, by Thackeray.	*Morris read this book with keen enjoyment.
Hard Times, by C. Dickens.	
Edinburgh Lectures, by Ruskin.	
Essays on Political and Social Science, by W. R. Greg.	
The Awakened Conscience, and *The Light of the World*, paintings by Holman Hunt.	
The Last of England, by Madox Brown.	
Walden, by Thoreau.	†According to Canon Dixon, Morris looked upon the churches of Amiens, Beauvais and Chartres, as "the noblest works of human invention."
Men and Women Poems,‡ by Browning.	‡The only book reviewed by Morris in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856).
Maud, by Tennyson.	Morris greatly esteemed Rossetti's early work, and the work of Tennyson until after "Maud."
The Blessed Damozel. Hand and Soul, by Rossetti, published in *The Germ*.	
Westward Ho, by C. Kingsley.	§Morris was a fervent admirer of Chaucer, and owned to his influence in his early years.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
The Oxford "Brotherhood"—(founded ten years later than the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," of Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt).	
About this time Morris wrote his first poem: *The Willow and the Red Cliff*—which he afterwards destroyed.	
1856. *January 1st.*	
The first number of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*—Morris as Editor.	A. C. Swinburne at Balliol.
Soon relinquishes editorship, but remains financially answerable for the paper, which existed twelve months.	
January 21st.	
Articled to G. E. Street diocesan architect, Oxford.	Philip Webb, senior clerk at Street's office.
Takes his B.A. degree.	
Week-ends with Burne-Jones at Chelsea—First meeting with Dante Gabriel Rossetti.§	
Street's office removed to London—Morris and Burne-Jones live together at Upper Gordon Street, Bloomsbury.	
December.	
Morris decides to give up architecture as a profession, and turns to painting.	

Literature and Art	Comments
**Principles of Psychology*, by Spencer.	*Morris was quite indifferent to the Scientific Thought of the day.
Procession of Cimabue's Madonna, painting by Leighton.	†Morris was much impressed by the painting of the dawn.
†*Rescue*, a painting by Millais.	
Leaves of Grass (1855), by Whitman.	
Aurora Leigh, by E. B. Browning.‡	‡Morris an admirer of Mrs. Browning's poetry, though he criticises the technique.
It is Never too late to Mend, by Reade.	
Little Dorrit, by Dickens.	
Elements of Drawing, by Ruskin.	
Carlyle writing *Frederick the Great*.	
The Scapegoat, a painting by Holman Hunt.	
	§ "Rossetti says I ought to paint. I *must* try."

Events in Morris' life	Social, Political, Religious
1857–9.	
Living at 17, Red Lion Square in unfurnished rooms (formerly occupied by Rossetti and Deverell)—designs all the furniture,* which he has made by a neighbouring carpenter, not always with success.	
1857.	
Paints his first picture in oil—*Sir Tristram and the Dog*, from *Morte d'Arthur:* and his first water-colour—*The Soldan's Daughter in the Palace of Art.*	Matthew Arnold, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1857-67.
Wrote a poem—*Praise of My Lady*—during a stay in Manchester to visit the Art Treasures Exhibition.	National Association for Social Science, founded.
First experiments in embroidery.	Indian Mutiny and the Relief of Lucknow.
To Oxford with Burne-Jones and Rossetti, to assist them with the frescoes at the Union Debating Hall.†	Manchester rejects John Bright as M.P. owing to his attitude on China and the Eastern Question.
Met at an Oxford Theatre, Miss Jane Burden—whom he afterwards married.	
Read *King Arthur's Tomb* to Swinburne.	
1858.	
Published *Defence of Guenevere and other Poems.*‡	Death of Robert Owen.
Abroad in August, and again in October, "to buy old manuscripts and armour, and ironwork and enamel."	Electric Lighting inaugurated.
Buys a meadow and orchard at Bexley Heath on which to build a house.	

LITERATURE AND ART

COMMENTS

*Rossetti described the furniture as "intensely mediæval —tables and chairs like *incubi* and *succubi*."

Two Years Ago, by C. Kingsley.

Political Economy of Art, by Ruskin.

Romany Rye, by Borrow.

†Morris was never satisfied with his part of the work, except as to colouring at the time.

Swinburne admired Morris' early work for its freshness and originality. The later work he did not care about.

‡Reviewed in the *Athenæum* as "a curiosity which shows how far affectation may mislead an earnest man towards the fog-land of Art."

Phantastes, by G. Macdonald.§

The Courtship of Miles Standish, by Longfellow.

§The precursor of Morris at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith called in Macdonald's time "The Retreat."

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
Living at 17, George Street, Oxford.	
1859.	
Marriage at Oxford, and tour to Paris, Belgium, and the Rhine.	Disraeli's Franchise Bill.
Living at 41, Great Ormond Street, while his "Palace of Art"—the famous Red House at Upton, Bexley Heath, is building.	
Joins the Volunteers.	
1860-5.	
Busy life at the Red House, designing and manufacturing —from tile painting to embroidering.	
1861.	
‡Firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., founded: workshops, office and showrooms at 8, Red Lion Square.	Death of Mrs. Browning, June 29th.
Much ecclesiastical work executed in London, Scarborough and Brighton (1861-3).	The Great Fire in Tooley Street.
	First Post Office Savings Bank.

Literature and Art	Comments
The Warriors of Helgeland, by Ibsen.	
Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, by Holmes	
Tale of Two Cities, by Dickens.	Philip Webb designs the Red House; and everything in it designed and decorated by Morris or his friends.
On Liberty, by Mill.	
The Vale of Rest,* by Millais.	*Considered by Morris to be Millais' best picture.
Adam Bede, by G. Eliot.	The Mid-Victorian Novel on the Scientific Movement.
Origin of Species, by Darwin.	
Ordeal of Richard Feverel, by Meredith.	Morris fitfully interested in G. Eliot's earlier novels.
The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, by Fitzgerald.	Morris compared reading Meredith to studying Euclid.
Thackeray starts the *Cornhill Magazine* and contributes *Lovel the Widower*, 1860.	
Mill on the Floss, 1860, by G. Eliot.	
Modern Painters (Vol. V.), by Ruskin.†	†Morris's opinion, "Ruskin has made Art possible for us."
Christ discovered in the Temple, 1860, a painting by Holman Hunt.	
Unto this Last, by Ruskin.	Ruskin as a Social Critic.
	This book strongly impressed Morris.
Cloister and the Hearth, by Reade.	‡Extract from Circular: "It is believed that good decoration involving rather the luxury of taste than the luxury of costliness, will be found to be much less expensive than is generally supposed."
Early Italian Poets, by D. G. Rossetti.	
Representative Government, by Mill.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1862.	
First public exhibition of the work of the Firm.	Fights in Hyde Park between Garibaldians and the Irish.
First Wall Papers designed: The "Trellis" paper (climbing roses) by Morris. The "Birds'" design by Webb. The "Daisy" design and later on the "Fruit, or Pomegranate," etc., etc.†	Burne-Jones and Ruskin tour in Italy.
1864.	
At Littlehampton with his family —Morris very ill with rheumatic fever.	Freedom of the City of London conferred on Garibaldi.
Growing expenses of his family, and diminishing dividends, combined with rapid development of the firm's business, makes living at the Red House impracticable—Morris decides to return to London.	Burne-Jones elected Assoc. Royal Water Colour Society.
	Death of Lord Elgin, Viceroy of India.
1865.	
Sells the Red House, which he never again visits.	W. E. Gladstone defeated in his candidature for Member of Parliament at Oxford, but returned for South Lancashire.

Literature and Art	Comments
*Silas Marner.** by G. Eliot.	*The famous discourse on Ghosts at the Rainbow Inn, greatly appealed to Morris's sense of humour: with no belief in the supernatural he remarked in later life "how jolly it would be to get the *creeps* again."
The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland, by Lecky.	†"Morris simplified and dignified domestic environment and provided many inartistic people with artistic homes." John Burns.
Utilitarianism, by J. S. Mill.	
First Principles, by Spencer.	
Goblin Market, and other Poems, by C. Rossetti.	
The Angel in the House, by Patmore.	All Morris's paper marked by simplicity of design. He, himself, said "I hate all rhetoric, but I hate it worst in art."
Love's Comedy, by Ibsen.	
Wild Wales, by Borrow.	
Posthumous publication of Francis Palgrave's *History of Normandy and England.*	
War and Peace,‡ (1863), by Tolstoy.	‡Morris approved of its sentiments, but found little enjoyment in reading this book of Tolstoy's.
Our Mutual Friend, by Dickens.	
Dramatis Personæ, by Browning.	
Enoch Arden, by Tennyson.	
Apologia pro Vita Sua, by Newman.	
The Merciful Knight, a painting by Burne-Jones.	
Frederick the Great,§ by Carlyle (1858-65).	§Considered by Morris to be the dullest of Carlyle's books, though as a moral force in the excellence, truth, and power of expression in Art it has great value.
Chastelard, and *Atalanta in Calydon,* by Swinburne.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
The Firm's business removed from Red Lion Square to 26, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, to which also Morris removes with his family.*	Death of Lord Palmerston, and Gladstone becomes Leader of the House of Commons. Fenian agitation in Ireland. Carlyle, Lord—Rector of Edinburgh University.
1866.	
Plans *The Earthly Paradise*, and writing *Jason*.	Fierce attack on Gladstone's Reform Bill. Commercial panic ("Black Friday"), May 11th. Excitement respecting the bad condition of London Workhouse Infirmaries. Cholera epidemic in East London. Working Class Industrial Exhibition at Islington. War between Germany and Austria. Death of Mrs. Carlyle.
1867.	
Published *The Life and Death of Jason*.† Living at Beaumont Street, Oxford, and writing *The Earthly Paradise*. Decorates the Green Dining Room at South Kensington Museum.	Explosion outside Clerkenwell Prison to release the Fenian prisoners. Metropolitan Poor Act for establishing Asylums for the Sick and Insane. Carlyle joins the Eyre defence committee. George Frederick Watts elected a Royal Academician. Robert Browning declines Lord Rectorship of St. Andrew's University.

Literature and Art	Comments
The Ethics of the Dust. Sesame and Lilies, by Ruskin.	*On his return to London, Morris said: "I felt as if I could kiss the London pavement." His feeling for London was one of mingled disgust and fascination.
Essays in Criticism, by M. Arnold.	
Dream of Gerontius, by Newman.	
Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe, by Lecky.	
Translation of Dante's *Inferno,* by W. M. Rossetti.	
Crown of Wild Olive, by Ruskin.	
Poems and Ballads (1st series), by Swinburne.	
The Prince's Progress and other Poems, by C. Rossetti.	
Hereward the Wake, by Kingsley.	
Thyrsis, by M. Arnold.	
Brand, by Ibsen.	
Armadale, by W. Collins.	
Felix Holt, by G. Eliot.	
The English Constitution, by W. Bagehot.	†Tennyson was an admirer of Morris's *Jason;* though not a great admirer of his later work.
Peer Gynt, by Ibsen.	
Fine Art, chiefly contemporary, by W. M. Rossetti.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1868.	
The Earthly Paradise (Parts I. and II.), published in April.	London Association for the Prevention of Poverty and Crime, founded.
Begins to study Icelandic with Mr. Magnússon.	Charity Organisation Society established.
The God of the Poor: published in *Fortnightly Review*.	The Torrens Act passed which gave local bodies power over the owners of insanitary dwelling-houses.
	Downfall of Disraeli's Ministry.
	John Bright, President of the Board of Trade.
	Sir Robert Peel, Secty. to the Poor Law Board.
1869.	
Morris and Magnússon publish a translation of the *Saga of Gunnlaug Worm-Tongue*, in *Fortnightly Review* (Jan.).	Edinburgh University first to admit Women as students of Medicine.
Continues Icelandic studies with Mr. Magnússon.	Holborn Viaduct opened Nov. 6th.
Published the *Grettis Saga* in April.	Disestablishment of the Church in Ireland.
Illness of Mrs. Morris; travelling abroad.	
1870.	
The Earthly Paradise finished.	Irish Land Act passed by large majority in both Houses of Parliament.
Begins to study Illuminating.	Elementary Education Act: Thomas Huxley also a member of the new School Board.
A Member of the new School Board for London.	War between Germany and France.
Published the *Volsunga Saga* with Mr. Magnússon.	Republic declared in France.
	Death of Charles Dickens.

Literature and Art	Comments
The Spanish Gypsy, by G. Eliot.	
The Moonstone, by Collins.	
Studies in French Poetry, by W. Besant.	
Procession of Bacchus, a painting by W. Richmond.	
The Holy Grail, by Tennyson.	
The Ring and the Book,* by Browning.	*Morris's dictum: "I can't make head or tail of it."
The Subjection of Women, by Mill.	
Womenkind in Western Europe, by T. Wright.	
Culture and Anarchy, by Arnold.	
Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors, by F. P. Cobbe.	
The Young Men's League, by Ibsen.	
Lothair, by Disraeli.	
Grammar of Assent, by Newman.	Tennyson wrote: "If I like the *Earthly Paradise* as well as I liked the *Jason*, I shall find it a rich treat."
Dante's Dream, a painting by D. G. Rossetti.	
Poems, by D. G. Rossetti† (for a long time circulated in MSS. Known by, and had an influence upon, many contemporaries).	†Recently recovered from his wife's grave.
	Morris, a life-long admirer of Dickens, as a man and social force.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1871.	
Morris and Rossetti join in tenancy of Kelmscott Manor House, nr. Lechlade, Oxford.	Poor Law administration transferred from Commissioners to Local Government Boards.
Accepts position as Director of the Devon Great Consols Company.	Open Spaces Acts, 1871-90.
First tour in Iceland accompanied by Mr. Magnússon, Mr. Faulkner, and Mr. W. H. Forde.	The Commune in Paris.
	Napoleon III. arrives in England.
Illuminates *Book of Verses.*	St. Thomas's Hospital opened.
	Carlyle President of the newly formed London Library.
1872.	
Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyám,* written on vellum and illuminated.	Strike of the Building Trades and Lock-out by the Masters.
Translations of Icelandic Sagas.	The Arbitration (Masters and Workmen) Act passed Aug. 6th.
Dyeing as a new industry added to the firm's work.	Small Pox Epidemic.
Morris with his family vacates Queen's Square and takes up residence at Horrington House, Turnham Green.	Public Health Act passed.
Published *Love is Enough,*‡ *or The Freeing of Pharamond*: a Morality.	Earl of Mayo, Viceroy of India, assassinated during a visit to the convict settlement in Andaman Islands.
1873.	
Second tour in Iceland.	Royal Commission on Labour Laws.
Meets J. H. Middleton, the Oriental scholar and archæologist, with whom he forms a close friendship.	First Hospital Sunday.
	Death of David Livingstone, the African explorer.
Icelandic translations now occupying much of his time.	Death of John Stuart Mill.

Literature and Art	Comments
Songs before Sunrise, by Swinburne.	
Song Tide, by P. B. Marston.	
Friendship's Garland, by Arnold.	
Desperate Remedies, by Hardy.	
Anna Karenina, by Tolstoy.*	*Morris not drawn to Tolstoy's books—finding them too sombre.
Munera Pulveris, by Ruskin.	
Essays on the Eastern Question, by Palgrave.	
Under the Greenwood Tree,† by Hardy.	†Morris unattracted by the Wessex folk of Hardy. They do not strike him as real men and women.
Fly Leaves, by C. S. Calverley.	
Middlemarch, by G. Eliot.	‡Highly praised by the critics.
Studies of the Greek Poets, by J. A. Symonds.	
Studies in the History of the Renaissance, by Pater.	
Literature and Dogma, by Arnold.	
A Pair of Blue Eyes, by Hardy.	
Emperor and Galilean, by Ibsen.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1874.	
Makes experiments in dyeing.	Riots at Northampton owing to the defeat of Charles Bradlaugh's candidature for Parliament.
Rossetti's illness and departure from Kelmscott Manor.	Defeat of the Liberal Government, and Disraeli again Prime Minister.
Sunday mornings with Burne-Jones at The Grange. Reads aloud Mommsen's *History of Rome*, while Burne-Jones is illustrating Virgil.	London School of Medicine for Women founded.
	Revolution in Spain.
	Death of Ferdinand Lassalle.
	Death of Oliver Madox Brown.
1875.	
Dissolution of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., and reconstitution under the sole proprietorship of Morris.	The "Cross" Act passed for the improvement of Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings.
Goes to Staffordshire dye works for instruction in the art of dyeing.*	Metropolitan Board of Works (1875-90) spend £1,500,000 in improvement schemes in London and erect over 7,000 workmen's dwellings.
Visits Belgium with his family.	Public Health Act passed.
A re-issue of *The Defence of Guenevere*.	Commercial panic in Russia owing to the failure of a German railway speculator, Dr. Strausberg.
Three Northern Love Stories: a translation from the Icelandic.	Death of Thomas Wright, Prison reformer.
Translates the *Æneids* of Virgil.	
1876.	
Appointed to an Examinership at the Schools of Art, South Kensington, which post he filled till his death.	Wars with Afghanistan (1876-80), caused by reception of Russian embassy at Cabul, and murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, the British envoy.
Treasurer of the Eastern Question Association.†	Eastern Question Association founded.
Resigns the post of Director of the Devon Great Consols Company	Massacres in Bulgaria.

Literature and Art	Comments
History of the English People, by Green.	
Life of Dickens, by Forster.	
Law of Human Life, by Hinton.	
Bothwell, by Swinburne.	
Prometheus Bound, a painting, by W. B. Richmond.	
The City of Dreadful Night, by J. Thomson.	
Songs of Two Nations, by Swinburne.	
All in All, by Marston.	*Morris felt that at the back of all decorative art lay colour and he was dissatisfied with modern methods of dyeing.
The Masque of Pandora, by Longfellow.	
Far from the Madding Crowd, by Hardy.	
Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East, by Gladstone.	†Morris's opinion: The freeing of the Serfs in Russia, and the Slaves under British rule, were two of the great landmarks in history.
Mistaken Aims, by W. R. Greg.	
Erechtheus, by Swinburne.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
Visits Lichfield Cathedral, and recognizes the need of a competent adviser during the proposed restoration of old buildings.	Collapse of Turkish Government.
Aristomenes : an unfinished poem appears in the *Athenæum.*	Suez Canal Shares bought by the British Government.
Publishes : *Sigurd the Volsung ; Fall of the Nibelungs ; The Two Sides of the River ; Hapless Love.*	Queen Victoria assumes the title of Empress of India.
	Benjamin Disraeli elevated to the peerage as Earl of Beaconsfield.
	R. W. Emerson nominated for Rectorship of Glasgow University ; defeated by Disraeli.
	Prince Peter Kropotkin, socialist and nihilist, escapes from prison at St. Petersburgh, and arrives in England.

1877.

Morris declines the Professorship of Poetry, offered to him by the University of Oxford.	Russo-Turkish War.
Founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (" Anti-Scrape "), and acts as secretary.	Carlyle joins in the protest against Turkey.
Served on committee to try to stop war in Afghanistan.	Union of German National and International Social-Democratic parties, at Gotha, 1875 —with membership of 1,000. In 1877 at the first general election the socialist vote numbered half a million.
The beginnings of Morris' active Socialism.	Universities of Oxford and Cambridge Act.
Work on the Eastern Question Association—and *Manifesto to the Working Men of England.*	Substitution of 1oz. limit instead if ½oz., by penny post.
Weaving added to dyeing industry of the firm.	
The firm's Sale and Showrooms moved from Queen Square to No. 449, Oxford Street—* (present Managing Director Mr. H. C. Marillier).	
Visit to Ireland† on business for the firm.	

Literature and Art	Comments
The Wages Question, by F. H. Walker.	
Beauchamp's Career, by Meredith.	
The Hand of Ethelberta, by Hardy.	
Daniel Deronda. Jubal and other Poems, by G. Eliot.	
Principles of Sociology, by Spencer.	
History of Co-operation, by G. J. Holyoake (1875-7).	
Pillars of Society, by Isben.	
Poems and Ballads (2nd Series), by Swinburne.	
Mirror of Venus. Pan and Psyche. The Beguiling of Merlin. Perseus and Andromeda. The Days of Creation, paintings by Burne-Jones.	
Love and Death, a painting by Watts.	
	*Morris in his blue blouse meets his clients here.
	†Morris much impressed by the beauty of Irish scenery, and compared it to Iceland.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
Stained glass windows executed for Marlborough College, and All Saints, Putney.	
First public lecture delivered in London: "On the Decorative Arts."	
1878.	
Touring in Italy with his family, and on their return move into The Retreat, Hammersmith —(formerly occupied by George Macdonald)—which Morris renamed Kelmscott House. Many delightful journeys by the highway of the Thames to and from Hammersmith to The Manor House, Kelmscott.	Cotton Strike and Lock-out in Lancashire—Riots quelled by the military.
Sets up a private tapestry weaving loom in the stable buildings at the Hammersmith house.	Crisis between Russia and the Balkans — Historic "Peace Congress" at Berlin.
Tapestry weaving undertaken by the firm.	Circular of Poor Law Board respecting farming out of pauper children.
Wrote a song†: "*Wake, London Lads*" for a meeting of the Eastern Question Association at Exeter Hall.	Famous libel suit between Ruskin and Whistler in consequence of the former's criticism of the latter in *Fors Clavigera*.
Visits Cambridge to address a political meeting.	Sir W. B. Richmond appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford.
Heads a deputation of Working Men, to Gladstone, on the Eastern Question.	First Telephone Exchange in the United Kingdom.
Organizes a gigantic meeting against the War Party, to be held at the Agricultural Hall —Gladstone to speak—This meeting had to be abandoned —"the Parliamentaries began to quake"—Morris' disgust and temporary break with politics.	

LITERATURE AND ART

*Equality,** a lecture, by M. Arnold.

Ravenna, by Oscar Wilde (Newdigate Prize Poem).

The Return of the Native, by Hardy.

Lives of Famous Poets, by W. M Rossetti,

COMMENTS

*Said Morris: "with the main part of which I heartily agree."

†Morris: "felt rather excited when they began to tune up."

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1879.	
At Kelmscott House, actively engaged in dyeing and weaving.	Fire at the Factory of Messrs. Jeffrey & Co., Islington, where the Morris Wall Papers were printed.
Treasurer of the National Liberal League.	Workmen's Social Education League founded in June.
Visits Salisbury and Stonehenge.	Rising of the Zulus in South Africa.
*Memorial of protest against the restoration of St. Mark's, Venice, signed by W. E. Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli.	Land League formed in Ireland, and agitation for Home Rule begins.
First meeting with Mr. H. M. Hyndman, founder of the Democratic Federation (1881).	
1880.	
Public exhibition of specimens of the famous Hammersmith rugs and carpets.	General Election, and a great wave of Liberalism throughout the country—W. E. Gladstone returned for Midlothian.
Morris with his family and a party of friends take a week's holiday by boat, along the Thames, from Hammersmith to Kelmscott—Morris assists in the cooking.†	Charles Stewart Parnell—leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons
	Extension of the system of self-government in India.
	Employers' Liability Act.
	Death of " G. Eliot " Dec. 22nd.
1881.	
Travelling about the country in search of a suitable place to set up a larger factory—finally settles on Merton Abbey, in Surrey, an old monastery built in the reign of King Stephen. In November the firm move to Merton from Queen's Square.	Land League proclaimed as an illegal Association. Disorder in Ireland.
	Irish Coercion Bill in operation.
	Battle of Majuba Hill.
	Browning Society founded.
	Death of Thomas Carlyle, Feb. 4th.

Literature and Art	Comments
Data of Ethics, by Spencer.	
Wild Life in a Southern Country, by R. Jefferies.	
Sacred Books of the East, by Max Müller.	
The Egoist, by Meredith.	
The Trumpet Major, by Hardy.	*Morris greatly delighted at the success of the St. Mark's Memorial—and particularly so at getting Disraeli's signature.
A Doll's House, by Ibsen.	
Theophrastus Such, by G. Eliot.	
Songs of the Springtide, by Swinburne.	
Christmas at the Mermaid, by T. Watts-Dunton.	
Love Sonnets of Proteus, by W. S. Blunt.	†Morris wrote: "Cook was I, appearing . . . at the critical moment, pot in hand."
The Tragic Comedians, by Meredith.	
A Laodicean, by Hardy.	
House Architecture, by R. Stevenson.	
Endymion, by Disraeli.	
Chaplain of the Fleet, and *The Seamy Side*, by Besant and Rice.	
Savonarola, by A. Austin.	
Mary Stuart, by Swinburne.	
A Pageant and other Poems, by C. Rossetti.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
Decorates the Throne and Reception Rooms at St. James's Palace—special designs by Morris for damasks, etc. His work here cut short by Trafalgar Square Riots—authorities decline to take his work after participation in these.	Death of George Borrow, July 26th.
Resigns the Treasurership of the National Liberal League.	
Stained glass windows executed for Salisbury Cathedral, also for Latin Chapel, Christ Church Oxford.	
Lecture on *The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization.**	
Lectures on Art at Wedgewood Institute, Burslem.	
Read Carlyle's book on Mrs. Carlyle.†	
The first Morris chintzes.	

1882.

Lectures at Birmingham on *Some of the Minor Arts of Life.*	Cottars Riots in Skye.
Difficulty in preparing lectures.	Murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke in Phœnix Park, Dublin, May 6th.
Morris gives evidence before the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction.	Resignation and strike of Police in Dublin, and consequent rioting, Sept. 1-8th.
Serves on Committee at the Mansion House on behalf of the Iceland Famine Fund.	89,565 emigrants leave Ireland this year.
Two lectures on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; and Relief of the Sufferers by Famine in Iceland.	Bill in Parliament to sink a well at Carshalton which would divert the water from the works at Merton Abbey—this was however defeated.
	Oscar Wilde delivers 200 lectures in America on Aesthetic Philosophy.
	Death of D. G. Rossetti, at Birchington-on-Sea, April 8th. Death of Emerson.

Literature and Art	Comments
Reminiscences of Carlyle, by Froude.	
Wood Magic, by R. Jefferies.	
	*Morris had a horror of pleasureless labour: and said in this lecture: "If I were to work ten hours a day at work I despised and hated, I should spend my leisure, I hope in political agitation, but I fear in drinking."
	†Morris not agreeably impressed on reading this book, though he owned to experiencing a certain fascination.
Thomas Carlyle, first forty years of his life, by Froude.	
Political Institutions, by Spencer.	
An Enemy of the People, by Ibsen.‡	‡Morris — Admitted Ibsen's power but not impressed by his work.
All Sorts and Conditions of Men by W. Besant.	
Tristram of Lyonesse, by Swinburne.§	§Though unable to find enjoyment in reading this poem, Morris realized that Swinburne's "sympathy with literature was most genuine and complete."
Future of Islam, by W. S. Blunt.	
Land Nationalisation, by A. R. Wallace.	
Two on a Tower, by Hardy.	
The Grave by the Sea, by T. Watts-Dunton.	
The Coming of Love (1st part), by T. Watts-Dunton, appears in *Athenæum*.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1883. *January 13th.*	
Hon. Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. Enrolled as a member of the Social Democratic Federation.*	
Return to active Socialism.	
First of many Sunday lectures at Manchester, to the Ancoats Brotherhood.	
Lecture on *Art and Democracy* at the Russell Club, Oxford, outspoken views on Socialism cause consternation among the promoters of the lecture.	
Unwillingly serves on the Executive of the Social Democratic Federation. Manifesto signed by Morris.	
Friendship with Charles Rowley.	
	Poor Law Conference.
	City of London Parochial Charities Act.
	Cheap Trains Act.
	Activity of all kinds of Social Reform at Oxford.
	First meeting of the Irish National League, February 7th.
	Explosion at Woolwich Arsenal, September 14th.
1884.	
Lecture activity—London, Manchester, Glasgow, Yorkshire and Leicester.	
Branch of Democratic Federation organized at Hammersmith.	
First number of *Justice*—in which appeared Morris's only art criticism.	
Dissensions in the Democratic Federation. Morris resigns.	
Founded the Socialist League† December 30th.	
Reconciliation with Ford Madox Brown.	
As one of its first members Morris joins the Art Workers' Guild.	
	Royal Commission to enquire into the condition of the Working Classes—the Prince of Wales a member.
	Franchise Meeting in Hyde Park.
	House and Lodger Suffrage extended to counties.
	Scottish Land and Labour League organized.
	Tennyson raised to the peerage.
	James McNeil Whistler awarded the Gold Medal of the Paris Salon.
	Raphael's *Madonna Ansidei* bought by the Nation for £70,000.

Literature and Art	Comments
The Wind and the Whirlwind, by W. S. Blunt.	
Expansion of England, by J. R. Seeley.	
Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth, by Meredith.	
Treasure Island, by Stevenson.	
The Mythic Art, by Ruskin.	
Historical Basis of Socialism in England, by H. M. Hyndham.	
Story of my Heart, by Jefferies.	
Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, (prepared by Carlyle), edited by Froude.	
Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, edited by C. E. Norton.	*On joining the S.D.F.—"I am truly glad that I have joined the only society I could find which is definitely Socialistic."
Man versus the State, by Spencer.	
The Woman Question in Europe, by Martin.	
Dorothy Forster. Children of Gibeon, by W. Besant.	
The Art of England, by Ruskin.	
English School of Painting, by Chesneau.	†"Anyone can be a public speaker if he only pegs away sufficiently at it."—William Morris.
King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, a painting by Burne-Jones.	
The Open Air, and *After London,*‡ by R. Jefferies.	‡"A queer book," said Morris—"absurd hopes curled round my heart as I read it."
The Wild Duck, the first of Ibsen's plays to be translated into English.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1885.	
February — starts the *Commonweal*, containing the Manifesto of the Socialist League—financed by Morris; and in which appeared much of his best literary work.	The Socialist League founded by Morris and Mr. E. Belfort Bax.
Meetings of the Socialist League at Limehouse—encounter with the police, and many arrests made; Morris joins in showing disapproval in Court, of the sentences imposed, is charged with disorderly conduct and striking a policeman, but is discharged.	Great Meeting of Unemployed on Thames Embankment—Democratic Federation Riots.
	Housing of the Poor Act passed.
	Burne-Jones elected A.R.A.
	Assassination of General Gordon at Khartoum.
	Edmund Yates imprisoned for libel.
Visits Oxford to arrange for meetings of the League.	
Dissensions appearing among the members of the Socialist League.	
Morris attacked with gout, and ill from overwork.	
1886.	
Visits Dublin, translating Homer on the journey.	
Speaks at a Socialist meeting in Edgware Road, and afterwards fined 1s. and costs for obstructing the thoroughfare.	
Manifesto in *The Commonweal* after the West End riots.	February 8th. Great meeting of the Unemployed in Trafalgar Square—riots and disorder throughout the West End.*
The Dream of John Ball appearing in *The Commonweal*: November 13th to January 22nd (1887).	Riots at Leicester during a Strike, and destruction of factories—February 11-16.
The celebrated "Flora" tapestry executed by Morris and Burne-Jones.	Failure of the first Home Rule Bill.
	John Bright severs his connection with the Gladstone party on the Home Rule Question.
	Opening of the Mersey Tunnel.‡
	Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons at Edinburgh admit Women to the diplomas.

LITERATURE AND ART

Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain.

Marcus the Epicurean, by Pater.

Marino Faliero, by Swinburne.

Prince Otto, and *The Child's Garden of Verse*, by R. L. Stevenson.

Diana of the Crossways, by Meredith.

Ideas about India, by W. S. Blunt.

The Triumph of the Innocents, a painting by Holman Hunt.

Article on *Pre-Raphaelitism* in *Contemporary Review*, by Holman Hunt.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by R. L. Stevenson.

Russian Epic Songs.†

The Mayor of Casterbridge, by Hardy.

COMMENTS

*Morris considered these riots contemptible—as riots—but looked forward to their having great effect both in England and abroad.

†Said Morris: "a new book which is very interesting."

‡The Mersey Tunnel was referred to by Morris as "a foul-odoured sewer."

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
	Matthew Arnold resigns Inspectorship of Schools, and awarded pension.
	Prince Kropotkin is banished from France and again takes refuge in England.
1887.	
Wrote a play: *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened,** in which Morris acted the part of Archbishop of Canterbury—for the benefit of *The Commonweal.*	February 8-10. Violent Riots in Lancashire among the Miners—74 men arrested.
November 13th†—"Bloody Sunday"—Morris marched in procession to Trafalgar Square to protest against the Irish policy of the Government.	Crimes Act passed.
	Mr. W. Scawen Blunt suffers imprisonment for taking part in the anti-Coercion movement in Ireland.
Morris attends public funeral of Alfred Linnell, who received injuries during the riots, which caused his death, and makes a speech over the grave in Bow Cemetery.	Time of great activity among philanthropists.
	Royal Holloway College for Women, founded.
The Dream of John Ball, published in book form—also his lectures *Signs of Change.*	Queen Victoria opens the Queen's Hall of the People's Palace, Mile End, E.
	Queen Victoria's Jubilee.
Address at Hammersmith Radical Club to condemn the Glenbeigh evictions.	
Opened a debate on Class War, at Chiswick Club: and lectured on Socialism, to working men at Merton Abbey.	
First edition of Morris's translation of *The Odyssey*‡ sold out in six weeks.	
1888.	
In August visited Birmingham, lecturing for the Socialist League.	Art Workers Guild founded.

Literature and Art	Comments
Life of Keats, by W. M. Rossetti.	
Life of Carlyle, by Dr. Garnett.	
Parleyings with certain People, by Browning.	
Inquiry into Socialism, by Kirkup.	
Locrine, by Swinburne.	
Imaginary Portraits, by Pater.	
The World went Very well Then, by Besant.	
The Ode of Life, by Sir L. Morris.	
The Woodlanders, by Hardy.	
Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life, by Meredith.	
In Russian and French Prisons, by Prince Kropotkin.	
	*"When scoundrels lament that they can no longer be scoundrels, for lack of opportunity, it is certain that the tables are turned." (*Nupkins Awakened*).
	†Morris impressed with lack of organisation among the working classes, and the imperative need of Education. His counsel: "Let every Socialist make a Socialist."
	Morris used to quote Huckleberry Finn's opinion of Odes: "If I had a yaller dog that took to writing odes I would shoot him."
	‡Reviewed by Oscar Wilde in *The Westminster Gazette*, as "one of the finest translations of the old Greek Saga."
Looking Backward, by E. Bellamy	Called by Morris: "a Cockney Paradise."

EVENTS IN MORRIS' LIFE

Acted as Chairman at a lecture given in Birmingham, by Mrs. Besant.

Lecture on Tapestry Weaving, for the Arts and Crafts Society.

Finished *The House of the Wolfings:* the first of his books to be printed from specially selected type.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS

Local Government Act: which admitted women as voters, and elegible as members of parish councils and school boards.

Sir W. B. Richmond elected A.R.A.

Sudden death of Matthew Arnold at Liverpool, April 15th.

Eduard Bernstein, German Social Democrat and political writer, living in London 1888-1901.

1889.

Sunday morning lectures at Walham Green.

Lectures in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Macclesfield, on Gothic Architecture at Art Schools. Guest at the Arts Club, Glasgow, and responds to the toast of Music and Literature.

To Paris in July to be present at the International Congress of Socialists.

Anarchists gain control of the Socialist League — Morris forced to relinquish control of the *Commonweal*, but remains financially responsible.

Writing *The Roots of the Mountains:**published in November, and bound in one of his own chintzes.

At this time keenly interested in the printing and binding of books, which leads to the rise of the Kelmscott Press.†

Technical Instruction Acts (1889 and 1891).

Art Congress at Edinburgh.

Great London Dock Strike.

Literature and Art	Comments
Plain Tales from the Hills, by Kipling.	
A Reading of Earth, by Meredith.	
Wessex Tales, by Hardy.	
The Happy Prince, by Wilde.	
	Swinburne spoke of *The House of the Wolfings* as a "delightful and wonderful book."
Asolando (1889-90), by Browning.	Description by Mr. Cunninghame Graham of Morris in his later years, when besieged by *ne'er-do-wells*: "a bull bison surrounded by a pack of wolves."
Appreciations, by Pater.	
Technology of Textile Design, by E. A. Posselt.	
Poems and Ballads (3rd issue), by Swinburne.	
In Vinculis, and *A New Pilgrimage*, by W. S. Blunt.	
Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer, by W. M. Rossetti.	
	*Morris wrote: "I am so pleased with my book—typography, binding, and, must I say it, literary matter."
	†"Do you know," said Morris: "I do so like seeing a new book that I have had a hand in."

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1890.	
News from Nowhere published in the *Commonweal*—the first book printed by the Kelmscott Press.	Housing of the Working Classes Act passed.
**The Story of the Glittering Plain* appearing in the *English Illustrated Magazine*.	Postmen and Police Strikes.
The Adoration of the Kings—a tapestry for Exeter College Chapel completed.†	Ruskin Society of London founded—March 21.
To replenish the coffers of *The Commonweal*—Morris again takes part in a play—*The Duchess of Bayswater*—produced by members of the Socialist League.	Drawing made a compulsory subject for boys in elementary schools.
Visits Lincoln in connection with "Anti-Scrape."	Death of Sir Edwin Chadwick, Poor Law Reformer.
Takes active part in type-founding, for the Kelmscott Press, with a view to bringing out *The Earthly Paradise*.	Death of Cardinal Newman, August 11th.
1891.	
Kelmscott Press set up in The Upper Mall, Hammersmith.	Free Education Act passed.
Caxton's Copy of *The Golden Legend* lent to him by the University of Cambridge, from which he prints the Kelmscott edition.	Omnibus Men Strike—June 7-13.
Visits Birmingham to give the Opening Address at the Exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite pictures.	Telephone from London to Paris opened.
Serious breakdown in Morris' health—visits Folkestone and then a tour in France.	Sir W. B. Richmond undertakes the mosaic decorations in St. Paul's Cathedral.
Poems by the Way published.	
Edits The Saga Library in conjunction with Mr. E. Magnússon.	

Literature and Art	Comments
Fabian Essays on Socialism.	
Socialism in England, by S. Webb.	
Love Among the Ruins. The Briar Rose, paintings by Burne-Jones.	**The Story of the Glittering Plain* is a typical specimen of Morris's romantic method. †Of the tapestry Morris said: "Nothing better of the kind has ever been done, old or new."
Social Diseases and worse Remedies, by Huxley.	
Contemporary Socialism, by Rae.	
One of our Conquerors, by Meredith.	
Tess of the D'Urbervilles, by Hardy.	
Star of Bethlehem, painting by Burne-Jones.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1892.	
Morris gives £250 for two small books: a little Psalter, a mediæval Book of Hours, and a portion of a folio Bible—from the Lawrence collection.	London Reform Union founded.
The Golden Legend issued from the Kelmscott Press and a large number of smaller volumes, including Caxton reprints.	Sunday open-air meetings of the Socialists at Chelsea, prevented by the Police.
Mowbray and Nicoll, printer and publisher of the *Commonweal*, arrested in consequence of an article denouncing the sentences passed on certain anarchists. Mowbray acquitted—Nicoll sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.	Death of Thomas Woolner R.A. one of the original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
	Death of Tennyson.
	Death of Walt Whitman and J. G. Whittier.
The death of *The Commonweal*; also of The Socialist League.	
1893.	
Morris issues from the Kelmscott Press: *Poems of Shakespeare*; Caxton's *Order of Chivalry*; Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*; and Caxton's *Godefrey de Boloyne*, the first book with the imprint "Published by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press."	First Working Men's Dwellings Bill passed.
Lecture on *Gothic Architecture*.	Mansion House Committee on Unemployment.
Socialism, its Growth and Outcome,‡ written in collaboration with Mr. Belfort Bax.	Burne-Jones on a misunderstanding with the Royal Academy, resigns the Associateship.
Manifesto of English Socialists with Mr. Hyndman and Mr. Bernard Shaw.	Death of Ford Madox Brown.
Begins the translation of the *Beowulf*.§	Huxley delivers the Romanes Lecture on Evolution and Ethics, at Oxford.

Literature and Art	Comments
Outlooks from the New Standpoint, by E. B. Bax.	
The Sisters, by Swinburne.	
The Importance of being Earnest, by Wilde.*	*Morris had no appreciation of Wilde's literary power.
The Master Builder, by Ibsen.†	†Morris' dictum: "The chap could write a play—but it isn't literature."
Esther, by W. S. Blunt.	
The Empty Purse and other Poems, by Meredith.	
Plato and Platonism, by Pater.	
Salomé, a play, by Wilde.	
Catriona, by R. L. Stevenson.	
Weaving and Designing of Textile Fabrics, by T. R. Ashenhurst.	
Cotton Weaving and Designing, by J. T. Taylor.	
Griselda, by W. S. Blunt.	
Poems, by Francis Thompson.	‡Obiter dictum of Morris: "Socialism will come to pass in spite of the Socialists."
	§Morris took much pleasure in this translation.

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
1894.	
Finished the translation of the *Beowulf*.	
Published: *Letters on Socialism*.	
Article in *Liberty* (February)—"A Journal of Anarchist Communism"—on "Why I am a Communist."	
Address on Art and Labour to the Guild of Lithographic Artists.	
Death of Mrs. Morris, Senr.	
Tour in Northern France.	
Lecture at Manchester on *Town and Country*.	
Finished the *Wood Beyond the World* (published 1895).	
Published the *Beowulf*.	
	Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Act.
	In May of this year a committee on Riots appointed.
	Assassination of Mons. Carnot, President of the French Republic.
	Edward Burne-Jones created a Baronet.
	Failure of the Second Home Rule Bill.
	Local Government Act passed.
	Death of Sergius Stepniak, the Russian Socialist—(Morris gave a short address at the funeral).
1895.	
A period of great activity: printing, designing, writing, and translating from the Icelandic—*Heimskringla*, *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* written, but not published till 1897.	
Selection of Coleridge's *Poems*,* issued from the Kelmscott Press.	
Sold an English *Book of Hours* to the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, for £200—retaining it during his lifetime by permission of the University.	
Address at the inauguration of the Oxford Socialist Union.	
	Notable decline in the export of natural indigo from India.
	Sir W. B. Richmond elected R.A
	Death of Thomas Huxley.
	Death of Frederick Engels, German Socialist leader.
	Sir J. E. Millais elected President of the Royal Academy.
	Alfred Austin appointed Poet Laureate.

Literature and Art	Comments
Women's Share in Primitive Culture, by O. Mason.	"I cannot recognize Anarchism (as it has been expounded to me) for it seems to me in its essence to be a negation of Society; I rather look upon it as a mood engendered by the wrongs and follies of our false society of inequality and which will disappear with them." (*Why I am a Communist*).
Anarchists, by Lombroso.	
Astrophel, by Swinburne.	
German Society at the close of the Middle Ages, by E. B. Bax.	
Imaginary Portraits, and *Greek Studies*, by Pater.	
Youthful Eccentricities, a Precursor of Crime, by F. Winslow.	"I want the town to be impregnated with the beauty of the country, and the country with the intelligence and vivid life of the town. I want every homestead to be clean, orderly, and tidy; a lovely house surrounded by acres and acres of garden. On the other hand, I want the town to be clean, orderly, and tidy; in short, a garden with beautiful houses in it." (*Town and Country*).
The Great War with Russia, by W. H. Russell.	*Morris was not an admirer of Coleridge's poetry; his opinion was that "by some freak of fortune he turned out a few real poems amongst the dreary flood of inanity which was his wont." Of *Christabel*: "the detail is fine." Of *The Three Graves*: "about as cheerful as influenza."
The Amazing Marriage, by Meredith.	
Jude the Obscure, by Hardy.	
Anarchy, by Prince Kropotkin.	
Capital, by Karl Marx.	
Economics, by H. M. Hyndman.	

Events in Morris' Life	Social, Political, Religious
Active endeavours to save Peterborough Cathedral from the hands of the restorers ineffectual.	
Two lectures in London on Gothic Architecture, and Gothic illustrations to printed books.	
Designs the binding for the Kelmscott Chaucer.	
Published *Child Christopher*, and *Fairy Goldalind.*	
Writing *The Sundering Flood:* which was published in 1898.	
Failing health and consequent depression.	
1896.	
January 3rd, attended a meeting of the Social Democratic Federation and spoke on behalf of unity.	The Jameson Raid in the Transvaal.
January 5th, the last Sunday evening lecture at Kelmscott House on "*One Socialist Party.*"	Death of Coventry Patmore.
January 31st, spoke at a meeting of the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising — (Morris's last speech in public).	Death of Mrs. Beecher Stowe.
Wrote an article on May Day, for *Justice*;	
Bought an English Bestiary of the 12th century, for £900.	
Published *The Well at the World's End.*	
On May 27th–30th, on a visit to Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, at Newbuildings Place, Sussex (the last private visit he paid).	

The Tale of Balen, by Swinburne.

Eighty-seven pictures contributed by Burne-Jones, to the Kelmscott Chaucer.

Father Archangel of Scotland, by R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

EVENTS IN MORRIS' LIFE

Morris's anxiety lest he should not live to see the *Kelmscott Chaucer* completed.

Two copies of the *Chaucer* ready on June 2nd—one, Morris gave to Burne-Jones—his own copy is now in Exeter College Library.

Increasing weakness—ordered a sea voyage—goes to Norway on July 22nd—returns Aug. 18th—though longing to see Kelmscott once again, he is too weak to undertake the journey.

September 6th.

Dictates the conclusion of *The Sundering Flood.*

October 3rd.

William Morris passes away, at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith.

October 6th.

Laid to rest at Kelmscott.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS

" A life without false shame, without self-seeking, and guided by an
" The beautiful things Morris made are taking their right place in the order . . . they are the common objects of daily use which he intended had such abounding faith, when they would be the natural outcome of work he stands for that; and coming generations will gather strength and relationship between art and conduct." (*William*

For the main facts of Morris's Life, the compiler is indebted largely
Life of William Morris: by J. W. Mackail (Longmans).
Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones: by G. B-J. (Macmillan); also to
Contemporary points of historical interest are drawn necessarily from
ledgment. The majority of the illustrative personalia are taken from the

Said Morris towards the end: "I have enjoyed my life, few more so, and death in any case is sure."

almost childlike dutifulness."—J. W. MACKAIL.
lives of many people as details and practical examples of a new social
them to be,—the anticipated products of that future state in which he
done in fellowship and happiness. If William Morris stands for any ideal
inspiration from his life, only as they realize his ideal of the organic
Morris: Socialist-Craftsman, by Holbrook Jackson)—(A. C. Fifield).

to the following:

the memorabilia of many friends.
a considerable variety of sources, too numerous for individual acknow-
present volume.

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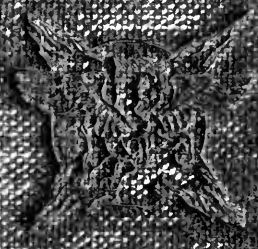
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